IL NOVELLINO

Broadway Translations

Il Novellino
The Hundred Old Tales

Translated from the Italian by
EDWARD STORER

To this day the author of this famous collection of tales remains unknown. But he probably was a minstrel of the Middle Ages who went from castle to castle entertaining his listeners with his stories — Bible stories, stories from French, Provençal, and Arthurian sources, stories from the Classics, and stories of Oriental origin. Some were moralistic, some humorous, some witty, some spicy.

As a collection they have never ceased to interest because of their humanness. Written in a quaint simple style, they are full of action, wit, and wisdom, and represent practically the oldest prose work in the Italian language.

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Broadway Translations

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety."

IL NOVELLINO

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THE HUNDRED OLD TALES

Translated from the Italian by
EDWARD STORER

With an Introduction

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CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION - - - - - - 1

IL NOVELLINO

I: *Proem* - - - - - - - - 35

II: *Of the rich embassy which Prester John sent to the noble Emperor Frederick* - 37

III: *Of a wise Greek whom a King kept in prison, and how he judged of a courser* - 40

IV: *How a jongleur lamented before Alexander the conduct of a knight, to whom he had made a gift on condition that the knight should give him whatsoever Alexander might present him with* - - - - 44

V: *How a king committed a reply to a young son of his who had to bear it to the ambassadors of Greece* - - - - 48

VI: *How it came into the mind of King David to learn the number of his subjects* - 50

VII: *Here it is told how the angel spoke to Solomon, and said that the Lord God would take away the kingdom from his son for his sins* - - - - - - 51

CONTENTS

PAGE

VIII: *Of the gift of a king's son to a king of Syria who had been driven from his throne* - - - - - - - 55

IX: *Here it is treated of an argument and a judgment that took place in Alexandria* 58

X: *Here it is told of a fine judgment given by the slave of Bari in a dispute between a townsman and a pilgrim* - - - 61

XI: *Here it is told how Master Giordano was deceived by a false disciple of his* - - 63

XII: *Here it is told of the honour that Aminadab did to King David, his rightful lord* - - - - - 64

XIII: *Here it is told how Antigonus reproved Alexander for having a cythera played for his delight* - - - - - 65

XIV: *How a king had a son of his brought up in a dark place, and then showed him everything, and how women pleased him most* - - - - - - - 66

XV: *How a land steward plucked out his own eye and that of his son to the end that justice might be observed* - - - 67

XVI: *Here it is told of the great mercy wrought by Saint Paulinus the bishop* - - 68

XVII: *Of the great act of charity which a banker did for the love of God* - - - 6

PAGE

XVIII: *Of the judgment of God on a baron of Charlemagne* - - - - - - 69

XIX: *Of the great generosity and courtesy of the Young King* - - - - - - 70

XX: *Of the great liberality and courtesy of the King of England* - - - - - 72

XXI: *How three necromancers came to the court of the Emperor Frederick* - - - 77

XXII: *How the Emperor Frederick's goshawk escaped to Milan* - - - - - 80

XXIII: *How the Emperor Frederick found a countryman at a fountain and asked leave to drink, and how he took away his drinking-cup* - - - - - 82

XXIV: *How the Emperor Frederick put a question to two wise men, and how he rewarded them* - - - - - - - 83

XXV: *How the Sultan gave two hundred marks to a man and how his treasurer wrote down the entry in his presence* - - 85

XXVI: *Here it is told of a burgher of France* - 88

XXVII: *Here it is told of a great Moaddo who was insulted* - - - - - - 90

XXVIII: *Here it is told of a custom that existed in the kingdom of France* - - - 91

XXIX: *Here it is told how some learned astrologers disputed about the Empyrean* - - 92

PAGE

XXX: *Here it is told how a Lombard knight squandered his substance* - - - 94

XXXI: *Here it is told of a story-teller of Messer Azzolino* - - - - - - 95

XXXII: *Of the great deeds of prowess of Riccar Loghercio of the Isle* - - 97

XXXIII: *Here is told a tale of Messer Imberal del Balzo* - - - - - - - 98

XXXIV: *How two noble knights loved each other with a great love* - - - - 100

XXXV: *Here it is told of Master Thaddeus of Bologna* - - - - - 101

XXXVI: *Here it is told how a cruel king persecuted the Christians* - - - - 102

XXXVII: *Here it is told of a battle between two kings of Greece* - - - - - 105

XXXVIII: *Of an astrologer called Melisus, who was reprimanded by a woman* - - - 106

XXXIX: *Here it is told of Bishop Aldebrandino, and how he was mocked by a friar* - 108

XL: *Of a minstrel whose name was Saladin* - 108

XLI: *A tale of Messer Polo Traversaro* - - 110

XLII: *Here is told an excellent tale of William of Borganda of Provence* - - - 112

XLIII: *Here it is told of Messer Giacopino Rangone and what he did to a court player* - - - - - - - 115

PAGE

XLIV: *Of a question that was put to a courtier* - 116

XLV: *How Lancelot fought at a fountain* - - 116

XLVI: *Here it is told how Narcissus fell in love with his own image* - - - - 117

XLVII: *Here it is told how a knight asked a lady for her love* - - - - - 119

XLVIII: *Here it is told of King Conrad, father of Conradin* - - - - - 119

XLIX: *Here it is told of a physician of Toulouse and how he took to wife a niece of the Archbishop of Toulouse* - - - 120

L: *Here it is told of Master Francis, son of Master Accorso of Bologna* - - 122

LI: *Here it is told of a Gascon woman, and how she had recourse to the King of Cyprus* 123

LII: *Of a bell that was ordered in King John's days* - - - - - - 124

LIII: *Here it is told of a privilege granted by the Emperor to one of his barons* - - 125

LIV: *Here it is told how the parish priest Porcellino was accused* - - - 126

LV: *Here is told a tale of a man of the court whose name was Marco* - - - 128

LVI: *How a man of the Marches went to study in Bologna* - - - - - 129

LVII: *The Woman and the Pear-tree* - - 130

		PAGE
LVIII:	*The Wisest of the Beasts*	134
LIX:	*Here it is told of a gentleman whom the Emperor had hanged*	134
LX:	*Here it is told how Charles of Anjou loved a lady*	137
LXI:	*Here it is told of the philosopher Socrates, and how he answered the Greeks*	141
LXII:	*Here is told a tale of Messer Roberto*	144
LXIII:	*Of good King Meladius and the Knight Without Fear*	146
LXIV:	*A Tale told of the Court of Puy in Provence*	146
LXV:	*Here it is told of Queen Iseult and Messer Tristan of Lyonese*	154
LXVI:	*Here it is told of a philosopher who was called Diogenes*	158
LXVII:	*Here it is told of Papirius and how his father brought him to the council*	159
LXVIII:	*Of a question which a young man proposed to Aristotle*	160
LXIX:	*Here it is told of the great justice of the Emperor Trajan*	161
LXX:	*Here it is told how Hercules went into the forest*	163
LXXI:	*Here it is told how Seneca consoled a woman whose son had died*	164
LXXII:	*Here it is told how Cato lamented against fortune*	167

PAGE

LXXIII: *How the Sultan being in need of money, sought to find occasion to proceed against a Jew* - - - - - - - 168

LXXIV: *The story of a vassal and a lord* - - 169

LXXV: *How the Lord entered into partnership with a minstrel* - - - - 171

LXXVI: *Here it is told of the great killing done by King Richard* - - - - - 174

LXXVII: *Here is told of Messer Rinieri, a knight of the Court* - - - - - 175

LXXVIII: *Here is told of a philosopher much given to the vulgarisation of science* - - 177

LXXIX: *Here it is told of a Court player who adored a lord* - - - - 178

LXXX: *The Pilgrim and the Ugly Woman* - 181

LXXXI: *Here below it is told of the council which was held by the sons of King Priam of Troy* - - - - - - - 182

LXXXII: *Here it is told how the Lady of Shalott died for love of Lancelot of the Lake* - - 184

LXXXIII: *How Christ going one day with his disciples in a deserted place, they saw great treasure* - - - - - - 186

LXXXIV: *How Messer Azzolino Romano arranged a great charity* - - - - 188

LXXXV: *Of a great famine that was once in Genoa* 192

LXXXVI: *The Emperor and the Pilgrim* - - 193

		PAGE
LXXXVII:	*How a man went to shrive himself*	194
LXXXVIII:	*Here is told of Messer Castellano da Cafferi of Mantua*	194
LXXXIX:	*Here it is told of a Court player who began a story that never ended*	195
XC:	*Here it is told how the emperor Frederick killed a falcon of his*	196
XCI:	*How a certain man confessed to a friar*	197
XCII:	*Here it is told of a good woman who had made a fine pie*	198
XCIII:	*Here it is told of a countryman who went to shrive himself*	199
XCIV:	*Here it is told of the fox and the mule*	199
XCV:	*Here it is told of a countryman who went to the town*	201
XCVI:	*Here it is told of Bito and Messer Frulli of San Giorgio near Florence*	201
XCVII:	*Here it is told how a merchant carried wine overseas in casks with two partitions and what happened*	205
XCVIII:	*Here it is told of a merchant who bought caps*	206
XCIX:	*Here is told a pretty tale of love*	207
C:	*How the Emperor Frederick went to the Old Man of the Mountain*	211

INTRODUCTION

One day about the end of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth, when the Middle Ages still darkly curtained the Renaissance from view, a "man of the Court", or minstrel, of some Italian lord had one of those inventive flashes which go to the making of literatures. This "man of the Court" who was perhaps a minstrel or *giullare* in little more than name—for his talent would be especially literary—knew by heart the little archaic tales which make up the slender corpus of the *Cento Novelle Antiche*, or *Novellino*. Often he told them or heard them told in baronial halls, and in lordly places, in rough huts after days of hunting, and in the encampments of battlefields. Before audiences of seigneurs and knights, in the company of stately prelates, and in the rollicking gatherings of dashing young *donzelli*, he had narrated or heard narrated by humbler men of his craft these simple

stories, some of them redolent of the wisdom of ages, others piquant with the flavour of his own times. Well he knew their effect, and could choose one to suit his company and occasion. Thus for the entertainment of graver and elderly lords he would select those of monkish or ascetic origin, while when in the company of gay young *cavalieri*, he would not hesitate to tell over some of the more libertine tales of his oral anthology. And the beginnings of the new Italian tongue, liberating itself from the secular thrall of its parent Latin, and having taken shape in its Tuscan and Sicilian matrixes, sought an early literary expression and found it in the work of our perhaps slightly pedantic *giullare* who will in all probability remain for ever unknown to us. That some such person existed is obvious, even if we cannot discover his name, nor his place of birth, nor estate. He may indeed have been a worldly type of monk rather than a " man of the court ", but the choice of the *novelle*, included in the collection, would certainly seem rather to point to the compiler being a man of the world rather than an ascetic. As does the fact that the tales

were not written in Latin, for the tenacious Latin clung to the cloisters after it had died on the tongues and pens of the lay world of those times. Our anthologist, who was in fact a great deal more than an anthologist, had coadjutors and rivals, successors and improvers, as the different manuscripts of the *Novellino* prove, but the original compiler of the *Cento Novelle Antiche*, as the work was previously called, was, one likes to believe, a single individual rather than a group of *giullari* or ex-*giullari* at the dependence of some medieval Medici. So the idea came to him of grouping together in one manuscript, which maybe he gave for copying to some Florentine monk, a selection of the knightly, moral, Biblical, classical, and popular tales which were most in vogue in his epoch. They were stories which had stood the test of time—some of them the test of successive civilizations—and had met the full-throated approval of numerous courts from Provence to Sicily, from Parma to Rome. Hitherto they had lived only on the lips of the Court story-tellers and wandering minstrels who narrated them. The tales which make up the *Novellino*

were, for the most part, " taught ", as we learn from our text by one *giullare* or story-teller to another. And each man added or altered them according to his wit and company. That the professional story-tellers played tricks with the tales in vogue and added details and colour of their own on occasion, we may well presume from *Novella* LXXXIX, where a " man of the Court " is reminded that he is spinning out his story at too great a length by one of the yawning company. The collection here printed under the title of *Il Novellino*, most of which tales appear in the original edition of the *Cento Novelle Antiche*, by Gualteruzzi, formed part of a vast repertory of similar stories, legends and anecdotes which were bandied about from province to province, from country even to country, and closed full lived medieval days of hunting and of battle.

Perhaps it was after some especially successful night when our unknown compiler had won the approval of a generous *signore* for his tales, and carried off a purse filled with a few gold coins to his lonely room, that the idea came to him of

framing the oral stories in a literary form. He had probably no notion that he was making literature, or founding one of the purest early classics of the young Italian tongue which the wit of the people had shaped out of the mother Latin. For him it was a matter of convenience and utility, though the urge to give a literary shape to the spreading idiom was in the air, deriving as an impellent necessity from the propagation of the spoken word which was widespread in Tuscany and vigorous elsewhere though in dialect forms. The first literary stirrings of the Italian conscience were in the air, and writers brought up on Latin chronicles and used to the mixed French and Italian of works like the *Entrée en Espagne* of Nicola da Padua were anxious to try their hands on the wonderful virgin material within their reach. We may reflect in passing what a marvellous opportunity it was for poets and story-tellers, although they did not recognize it as such—to find themselves in the privileged position of having a virgin language at their command, not debased by the ready-made phrase, the trite mechanical expression. With a new language coming into

being, nothing or almost nothing is conventionalized. The idea runs straight from the dynamic thought to the natural phrase. There are no ready-made channels to absorb the spontaneity, convenient and inevitable as such moulds afterwards become.

So our " man of the Court " dreamed upon his great idea, developed it, thought it over, took counsel maybe of some tale-loving *signore* and set to work. We may, I think, fairly argue that it was some professional teller of tales, some *giullare* of more than average education rather than any monk or ascetic who wrote the first manuscript of the *Hundred Old Tales*, and this for the extremely free, not to say bawdy character of three or four of them. (These latter have not been translated.) Moreover, the curious and often ridiculous errors in geography, history, chronology and physics which we find in the *Novellino* is surely proof that the person who compiled it was no great scholar or man of learning. The mistakes which appear in it could hardly have been perpetrated by a learned monk well read in history and the classics. Again, Latin was still

the language of science and such scholarship as existed then. The times were rude in a certain sense, though perhaps less rude than is generally imagined, but some of the errors to be found in the tales are so gross and absurd that they could not have been committed to a manuscript by anyone of real learning. Which gives us ground for believing that the original anthologist was of the minstrel class, a *giullare* of degree and some education, with literary yearnings, stimulated perhaps by the exercises of his French and Provençal colleagues in the arts of story-telling and song.

Italian critics and writers generally on the subject of early Italian literature are by no means agreed as to the origins of the tales which make up the *Cento Novelle*. It was during the latter half of the thirteenth century, however, that the new tongue began to make headway against the obstinacy of the Latin, but it is only towards the end of the thirteenth century that original works in Italian prose appeared. Before the thirteenth century practically no Italian literature existed. Italian writers had written in Latin,

in French, and in a kind of mixed French and Italian. We have the Latin chronicles of the IXth, Xth, XIth, and XIIth centuries which contain classical and mythological allusions. Guido delle Colonne wrote his Trojan poem in Latin. In the *Bovo d'Antona*, the Venetian dialect makes itself clearly felt. It was from about the year 1250 that the national literature developed. In the North of Italy, the poems of Giacomino da Verona and Bonvecino da Riva, which were religious in character, showed traces of the movement which prepared the way for the instrument that was to serve Dante and Boccaccio. In the South of Italy, and in Sicily especially, at the Sicilian court, there arose a school of poets who specialised in love songs which were largely imitations of Provençal rhymers. To this Siculo-Provençal school belonged Pier delle Vigne, Inghilfredi, Jacopo d'Aquino and Rugieri Pugliese. The south of the Italian continent with the exception of Naples and some monasteries like Salerno, was steeped in ignorance, and rough dialects grew out of the Greco-Latin soil with nothing literary about them. Frederick II

himself, who ruled his Sicilian court, was a poet of sorts himself, though his productions were imitative and unoriginal like most of the members of the Sicilian school. As to what is exactly the oldest prose writing in the Italian language opinions differ, but certainly the *Composizione del Mondo* by Ristoro d'Arezzo (a Tuscan) who lived about the middle of the thirteenth century, is one of the oldest, if not the oldest. Matteo Spinelli da Giovenazzo, too, may lay claim to be one of the very earliest writers in the Tuscan dialect, which afterwards, and with great rapidity, developed into the Italian language. Another name that may be mentioned is that of Ricordano Malespina.

The French fabliaux, and the works of the French and Provençal singers and makers of *contes* certainly inspired writings like the *Novellino* and the few other contemporary works of a similar character. The former reached a far higher degree of art than they ever attained to in Italy. To the extensive works in thousands of lines which the other romance languages can show, Italy can only put forward the bare skeleton tales of the *Novellino*, the *Conti dei Antichi Cavalieri*,

the *Conti Morali del Anonimo Senese*. Earlier works there were in Latin, such as the famous *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Disciplina Clericalis*. Several of the tales which appear in the *Novellino* also figure in *Disciplina Clericalis* and in the *Gesta*, as we shall see.

To all the poetry of the French and Provençal bards of the Middle Ages Italy has nothing to oppose. *Cantastorie* or minstrels there were, but the Italian *giullare* was considerably lower in the hierarchy of song than his French or Provençal brothers. In Italy such poems or songs lacked the profound impress of the people's spirit. No memory of these Italian songs has remained, though they must have existed, and perhaps in plenty, but the versifiers of the period were plebian and lowly. They lacked the protection of important courts. While France, Spain and Germany can show a rich epic popular poetry, Italy can only boast a few hundred *novelle* in prose.

The tale or *novella* was a literary product especially pleasing to the Middle Ages, which was, in the matter of culture, an infantile age. The period seems to have almost a childish

affection for the marvellous tale. Learning and intellectual sophistication of any kind was in the hands of a few, was almost a kind of vested interest in which not only the common people, but even the lords and knights themselves had no interest or claim. This was especially the case in Italy, where no vehicle existed for its propagation until the end of the thirteenth century. Therefore to simple minds, unused to the mysteries of literature, save those written in a hermetic and pompous tongue fast disappearing from common use, the tale was a spiritual refreshment aptly suited to the time. In England, too, we see examples of Latin tales as in the *De Naturis Rerum* of Neckham.

But if Italian culture was backward at this time, or non-existent save in Latin forms, it grew very quickly, and from its plebian sources there came into being the new art of Boccaccio. For though the language was new, the Italians were by no means a new people. They had behind them a long uninterrupted literary tradition from which they could with difficulty withdraw themselves. There was even a similarity of

spirit between those who clung to the old traditions and wrote in Latin, and the people seeking to express themselves in their young language. The two literatures had a great deal of the same spirit and character. The early Italian prose developed to a great extent along the lines of the earlier chroniclers who wrote in medieval Latin. Nor could it very well be otherwise, for even a new literature of a new tongue requires models, and where should the new nationalist scribes turn for models save to the Latin writings of their own countrymen? It is not too much to say that Italian grew quickly because of its Latin traditions. It is astonishing to think how quickly it did grow, from the simple beginnings of the *Cento Novelle* to Boccaccio. In less than one hundred years Dante is reached. This rapid growth evidently depended on the fact that Italian was a continuation of Middle-Age Latin. In its spoken form, it had been in use for some time, and it merely required a certain amount of independence and belief in the popular idiom to turn it to literary uses.

In the tales which make up the *Novellino*,

we can see how near the form is to the spoken language, especially in those tales which are of contemporary and local origin. The compiler did little more than put into simple Tuscan prose tales that for the most part were well known in oral tradition. When I come to examine the tales individually, we shall see which came from the classics, which from Oriental sources, which from Provence and which were the product of local wit.

It is alleged in some quarters that the *Novellino* or the *Cento Novelle Antiche* was not the work of a single compiler. This thesis is supported by arguments which point out the diversity of style and colour in the tales. It seems to me that it may also be argued from this that, as indisputably the stories derive from many stories, such as Provence, the Bible, the Greek and Latin classics, and the tales of the moral and ascetic writers, such a variety of style and colour is only to be expected. If one prefers the theory of single authorship—an authorship of course which is limited as the subject matter of the tales was common property—one can find just as many arguments for it as the

upholders of the plural authorship theory can lay against it. There are those who deny the authorship of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to one poet. One cannot pretend to settle a question which still perplexes Italian critics of their own early literature. One may, however, refer briefly to some of the best accredited opinion on the subject.

Francesco Costerò, who believes the tales to be written by several hands, writes in his preface to a popular edition of the *Novellino :* " Nobody has yet, in spite of all the efforts of the learned, arrived at determining for certain the time or authorship of the *Novellino*. This is very natural, in the case of a work which was obviously written by several people and gathered in volume with time. In the *Novellino*, Saladin is spoken of, and we know that he died in 1193, during a war with the Christians of the Third Crusade. The book also makes reference to the Cavaliere Alardo di Valleri, who contributed to the victory of Charles d'Anjou at the battle of Tagliacozzo in 1268. From one date to the other there pass some seventy-five years, whence we should have to admit that the author was more than a hundred

years old if he were one and the same person. Further, we must take account of the style of the book". This argument of Costerò does not seem very difficult to answer.

Some people are of the opinion that Brunetto Latini was the author of some of the tales and Professor Carbone writes that: "Latini added some of the finest flowers of the collection and the two narratives of Papirius and the Emperor Trajan are to be found with slight differences in the *Cento Novelle* and in *Fiore di Filosofi e di molti Savi*".

To give an idea of the close similarity that exists between the two versions of the Trajan tale, I give a translation of both versions and place them side by side. The Trajan story is No. LXIX of the present collection. The version to be found in the *Fiore di Filosofi* runs:

Trajan was a very just emperor. Having one day mounted his horse to enter into battle with his cavalry, a widow woman came before him, and taking hold of his foot, begged him very earnestly and asked him that he should do justice on those who had wrongfully killed her son, a most upright

lad. The Emperor spoke to her and said: I will give you satisfaction on my return. . . .

The version in the *Novellino* runs:

The Emperor Trajan was a most just lord. Going one day with his host of cavalry against his enemies, a widow woman came before him, and taking hold of his stirrup, said: Sire, render me justice against those who have wrongfully killed my son. And the Emperor answered: I will give you satisfaction when I return.

As we see, the versions are almost identical, and the similarity continues in about the same degree throughout the two versions of the same tale.

The opinion has been put forward that Francesco da Barberino had a hand in the shaping of the final collection of tales. This theory was advanced by Federigo Ubaldini in 1640. Adolfo Ancona, certainly one of the weightiest authorities on early Italian literature, is of the opinion that the *Novellino* was the work of one man. The matter is complicated by the existence of more than one manuscript.

The first edition of the tales was printed in Bologna in 1525 by Carlo Gualteruzzi of Fano under the title *Le Ciento Novelle antike*. In 1572, there appeared in Florence the *Libro di Novelle et di bel Parlar Gentile*, under the editorship of Monsignor Vicenzo Borghini. This latter edition differs considerably from the Gualteruzzian version, contains tales which do not appear in the earlier version and omits others contained therein. The discussions concerning the two versions soon began. But the authenticity of the Gualteruzzian version is now generally accepted, though the matter can by no means be considered as finally settled. Borghini in his edition seems to have sought to remove from the text all the moral and ascetic tales or those deriving from monkish or ecclesiastical sources. According to D'Ancona, the version of Borghini is an altered and much edited one, while the original edition of Gualteruzzi corresponds with the different codexes of the work, except in the case of the Codex Panciatichianus Palatinus, which has recently come in for accurate examination at the hands of Professor Sicardi, who has written

a long essay prefacing his edition of the *Novellino*. Sicardi, it may be mentioned, holds by the theory of the plural authorship of the tales. A curious fact in connection with the early editions of the *Hundred Old Tales* is that it has been alleged that an earlier edition than that of Gualteruzzi published in Bologna in 1525 exists in England. It is supposed to have been offered for sale by a London dealer in first editions, and to have passed into private hands. I have not been able to verify the truth of the existence or not of this alleged early edition.

The manuscripts of the *Cento Novelle Antiche* are eight in number, and seven of them correspond with the *editio princeps* of Gualteruzzi. Only one, the Codex Panciatichianus, discovered by Wesselofsky, and published by Biagi in 1880, differs materially, and contains some thirty tales and proverbs which do not appear in either of the two principal editions of Gualteruzzi or Borghini.

The eight codexes are: the Codex Marciana, which is in Venice; the Vatican manuscript; while the other six are in Florence. Of these,

one is in the Laurentian library, three are in the Palatine section of the National Library, while the remaining manuscripts are to be found in the Magliabechiana section of the same institute.

The tales contained in the *Novellino* divide themselves into sections. We have the Biblical stories founded on occurrences related in the Old Testament, and generally containing inaccuracies and alterations in the names and places of the characters referred to. This in itself, as may also be argued in the case of some of the tales deriving from the Greco-Roman sources, would seem to prove the popular origin of the collection. The unknown compiler took the oral story as he found it, even if it contained facts chronologically or historically at variance with the Biblical narrative. We have an instance of this in story number IV of the present collection, where, instead of the prophet Gad giving David the choice of punishments, an angel is made to appear and tell David that he has sinned. Again, in Novella XII, the compiler has mixed up the names of Joab and Aminadab, while in Novella XXXVI,

the account of the second half of the tale is not according to the Biblical narration.

Another portion of the stories derive from French and Provençal sources and the Arthurian cycle is drawn on more than once. The story of how " The Lady of Shalot died for love of Lancelot of the Lake ", which is one of the most beautiful of the entire collection, is an instance in point. The *Novelle* telling of the Lady Iseult and Tristan of Lyonesse, and the short one numbered XLV are also from the Arthurian romance. Of probable Provençal origin are the tales concerning the Young King and William of Borganda, the tale of Messer Imberal del Balzo, and perhaps the two tales regarding Richard Cœur de Lion, as well as the story on the Doctor of Toulouse, that about Charles D'Anjou and " What happened at the Court of Puys in Provence ". Many of the tales are taken from French originals, such as those dealing with the Astrologers of France, with Messer Roberto di Ariminimonte (LXII), while it is possible that the stories dealing with the young King and Richard Cœur de Lion came from the French and not the

Provençal. The *novelle* deriving from the knightly romances may also very well be of French origin.

Another section of the tales would appear to have their origins in the classics, and among these are the stories dealing with Trajan, Cato, Seneca, Socrates, Hector and Troy, Narcissus, Hercules, Aristotle and others.

A number are of oriental origin. Among these may be mentioned the *novella* treating of Prester John, of " the Greek kept in prison ", " How a jongleur lamented before Alexander ", " God and the Minstrel " and the last one in the book about the Old Man of the Mountain.

As the reader will see, the stories in this collection, which represent what is the oldest or almost the oldest work in prose in the Italian language, and the first book of stories in that tongue, have a very special and characteristic style of their own. Their language is the language of the beginnings of a culture, simple to the point of bareness, full of action, wisdom and wit. The narratives are the narratives of a man unused to

word-spinning and still a mediæval person of action, a trifle afraid of the mystery of the written word, though probably almost a pedant in comparison with the illiterate world of his time. The language of the tales calls to mind very obviously the style of the Bible, or of the early Hellenic poems, though it is ruder than either. The very simplicity which is one of the charms of the narrative has its drawbacks or rather surprises, especially to modern minds accustomed to a more flexible and more elastic syntax. The personal pronouns have a curious way of getting mixed up in the *Novellino*. One feels that the story-teller has a perfect, even childish confidence in the reader's interest, and as a matter of fact, the tales are so short and easily grasped that the doubt as to who is the particular " he " or " she " or " they " referred to is little more than a pedantic one. I have only altered these peculiarities of the prose where it has seemed necessary in order to allow the meaning to come through clearly, for certainly a great deal of the quality and charm of the book lies in its quaint style. To smooth this out overmuch, would certainly destroy the vigour of the

original. Many of the tales, as I have said elsewhere, are common to many nations, and it is largely due to the strong if abrupt style of the narratives that they give us such a sharp sense of the period to which they belong.

To read the tales in the present collection provides a remarkable contrast with modern prose, which can never seem to say enough. The compiler or author, if so we may call him, of the *Hundred Old Tales*, eschews all psychology the meaning of which word he was ignorant of, and abstains from comment unless it be in the nature of moral comment. This latter, of course, comes from the older tradition of Latin tales to which books like the *Gesta Romanorum* and *Disciplina Clericalis* belong. But in this case, the moral is pointed out out of respect to the older tradition, from which the author could not quite shake himself free, writing, though he was, in a new idiom. These moralisings which conclude some of the tales, or are allowed to be understood, are more a tribute to the moral than the literary traditions of the times.

The beauty and dramatic effect of some of the

tales is extraordinary. The version given of the Lady of Shalot and how she died for love of Lancelot is exquisite in its purity and tenderness. It is quite a little masterpiece of literature.

"The sail-less vessel was put into the sea with the woman, and the sea took it to Camelot, and drifted it to the shore. A cry passed through the court. The knights and barons came down from the palaces, and noble King Arthur came too, and marvelled mightily that the boat was there with no guide. The king stepped on to it and saw the damsel and the furnishings. He had the satchel opened and the letter was found. He ordered that it should be read, and it ran: 'To all the Knights of the Round Table this lady of Shalott sends greetings as to the gentlest folk in the world. And if you would know why I have come to this end, it is for the finest knight in the world and the most villainous, that is my Lord Sir Lancelot of the Lake, whom I did not know how to beg that he should have pity on me. So I died for loving well as you can see'."

It would be hard to surpass the pure simplicity

of this even in verse. The language moves directly from fact to the written word. There is no hint of conscious colouring, no attempt to heighten the effect by a single adjective. Adjectives indeed are extremely rare in the *Novellino*, as in all good simple prose for the matter of that. The writer rarely departs from "very beautiful" or "most gentle" or "very rich". As a rule, the tales are almost adjectiveless, and never are adjectives used to round out an effect or disguise an impoverished period. The rhythm of the tales, almost monotonous perhaps, yet wonderfully strong, moves surely from subject to predicate with the least possible adornment. Adornment, in fact, is not the word to use in this connection, for as such it does not exist. Such adjectival or adverbial phrases as are used are such as are only strictly demanded by the accompanying nouns or verbs. This, of course, is one of the characteristics of good literature in all ages, and especially is to be found in early classic prose.

A typical story of the Middle Ages is the dramatic, macabre tale of the knight who was charged with the custody of a hanged man, and

found a substitute for the body which had been taken away by the dead man's friends in the corpse of the husband of a woman to whom the knight makes love. The love scene which takes place at night by the grave-side of the woman's husband whom she is desperately mourning is grim and picturesque indeed. We have to go to our own Border and Scotch Ballads to find anything similar. Though the tale is of ancient origin, and is to be found in Petronius, it has all the characteristics of awe, swift passion, gloom and mockery which we associate with the so-called dark ages. The little story outlines a drama of great gloom and power in a few rapid touches. The whole thing is told in some three or four hundred words, but the content is packed with action, and not a word is wasted in ornament or comment. If we take two or three of the lines of the tale individually, we see how rich in action and picturesqueness they are, though a chaster and more ascetic prose could hardly be used.

" Do as I say," says the knight at the grave-side ; " Take me to husband, for I have no wife, and save my life, for I am in danger. . . .

Show me how I may escape if you can, and I will be your husband and maintain you honourably. Then the woman, hearing this, fell in love with the knight. . . . She ceased her plaint, and helped him to draw her husband from his grave. . . ." We may note how in the next sentence the writer passes quickly over what has happened on the journey to the scaffold, discarding it as undramatic, for the same sentence goes on at once ". . . and assisted him to hang him by the neck, dead as he was ".

A modern story-teller would have filled several pages describing the lugubrious procession in the heart of the night from grave-yard to scaffold, and have described at length the feelings of the knight and the woman, with ample reflections on feminine nature; while the stars, the countryside, black cypresses, notes of melancholy owls, the sentinels at the city gates would all have been usefully dragged in to impress the reader.

The Middle Ages was childish perhaps in its love of the marvellous and marvellous stories, but the audiences of the old *giullari* and *jongleurs* certainly did not lack imagination. In this they

were like children who are rich in it, and to whom a bare swift tale with sharply outlined facts is dearer than all the considerations and artifices with which a clever tale-teller may embellish it.

If it is not correct to state that people to-day have less imagination than folk in the Middle Ages, it is very likely true that as they have so many more calls on it, it easily becomes tired and loses in elasticity. Those with lively imaginations like to add a good deal themselves to a story that is told them, and such was the case with the listeners to the stories given in this collection. They would probably have resented the *guillare* overloading his narratives with subsidiary facts, descriptions and artificial holding of the interest. They could do that kind of thing very well themselves. In fact, we have internal evidence from the *Novellino* itself that lengthy stories were not to the taste of the listeners of those times. In Novella No. LXXXIX, we read of a *giullare* " who began a story that never ended ". One of the hearers interrupts the story-teller, and assures him that the person " who taught him the tale did not teach him all of it ". The *giullare*

ask why and is answered: "Because he did not teach you the end".

Some writers have put forward the theory that the stories contained in the *Cento Novelle Antiche* were only the synopses of longer stories, the index, so to speak of a much larger book that has been lost. But it seems to me that for the considerations before mentioned this is not the case. The *novella* in its infancy was always a brief narration, and even when we come to Boccaccio and his wider manipulation of material, the tales even then are not long as we judge the length of stories nowadays.

Certainly the modern man who lives a much less physical existence than his forbears, and has perforce to use his imagination and other intellectual faculties to a far greater extent than did the elder folk, requires his stories completely filled in so that they leave him little work to do. The Tired Business Man who takes the place of the bold baron and the fat bourgeois of the old days exacts from his modern jongleurs that they give him the least possible intellectual fatigue.

A number of the tales seem to belong especially to the period, and differentiate themselves from the older ones in the collection where the monkish and Latin flavour clings still through the freer prose of the new idiom. Many of them have quite a Boccaccio touch, and already we seem to hear the round jovial laugh, the sensual yet humanistic mockery of the great Florentine. Among these we may mention the story of the *Woman and the Pear-tree*, which is not to be found in the original Gualteruzzi edition of 1525, but comes from the Panciatichiano MS. The picture of the two lovers up in the branches of the pear-tree, while the blind husband clasps the trunk of the tree below is worthy of the author of the *Decameron*. The ending of the story, however, seems to be more in keeping with the period.

The curious dialogue between God and Saint Peter, blasphemous almost at first sight and yet innocent in its curious naivete and simplicity, is the kind of thing we find in our period. It is on a par with that other extraordinary story of God and the minstrel who went partners together, which is obviously an old and favourite tale and

much in the style of the *duecento*. Borghini left it out of his edition, perhaps thinking it was offensive to religious sentiment.

Boccaccian is Novella No. XLIX, the story of the Physician of Toulouse, though the tale would appear to come from the French. So too is the story about the parish priest Porcellino, whose name is certainly chosen to give further point to the tale. In the same category comes Novella LXII, the tale of Messer Robert of Burgundy. The story in fact appears in the *Decameron*.

Many of the narratives have quite a different character to this rich mirthful mockery. Tales like that relating to Prester John, to the wise Greek whom a king kept in prison, the " Argument and Sentence that were given in Alexandria ", Antigonus and Alexander, the Land Steward who plucked out his own eye, belong to another epoch altogether and form part of the monkish and ascetic heredity of the *Novellino*.

A few (four or five) of the stories are frankly indecent, and are always expurgated from popular editions of the work in Italy, a course

which I have followed here. Two or three of the present collection are also a trifle free, but I have decided to leave them in their place, with a few unimportant excisions and alterations.

Another outstanding feature of the stories is the number of them which tell of smart sayings, clever retorts and elegant ripostes. Evidently a great deal was thought of such kind of quick-wittedness in the days of the *duecento*. The compiler in the Proem to the book lists his "fair courtesies and fine replies, valiant actions and noble gifts", though there are a number of tales dealing with snubbing or sarcastic replies, which do not seem to be included in the category outlined in the Proem.

There is a certain curious childishness in the almost awed admiration which the compiler seems to feel for anyone who makes a witty retort, or snubs an opponent neatly. It is part of the intellectual simplicity of the time. Thus we have the answer of the pilgrim to the Emperor in Tale LXXXVI, the answer of the man who went to confess himself to the priest, the clever trick of the man who lent money to the student in the

"Man of the Marches who went to study at Bologna".

Great importance, too, is laid on the knightly virtues of kindliness, courtesy and generosity; Knights were expected to be brave, but also gentle, in the sense which the word has taken on when allied with the noun and transformed into our modern gentleman. This common vocable of our daily life is a direct inheritance from the times of chivalry, and retains in its best meaning a great deal of the old significance.

In the language of the stories there is a good deal of Latin grace, order and sense of measure due to the old tradition. For the tales in this collection passed in many cases from their original Latin forms to the mouths of the people, taking on in the process a new originality, character and colour before they were written again in the virgin prose of Tuscany.

That these little tales can please modern readers there is good reason to believe, for they have been tested by time and worn smooth by repetition of all useless angles or unnecessary

detail. There is in them as their especial merit great humanity, passion, drama, and often a wisdom so old and mysterious that it seems to reach back through half a dozen civilizations to the very heart and mind of early man.

And so I close this note of introduction and open the way for the tales themselves " for the use and delight of such as know them not and fain would know " as the compiler says.

IL NOVELLINO

This book treats of flowers of speech, of fine courtesies and replies, of valiant actions and gifts, such as in time gone by have been made by noble men.

I

Proem

When Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke with us in human form, he said among other things, that the tongue speaks from the fulness of the heart.

You who have gentle and noble hearts above other men, shape your minds and your words to the pleasure of God, speaking of honouring and fearing Our Lord who loved us even before He created us, and before we ourselves loved Him. And if in certain ways we may, without giving Him displeasure, speak for the gladdening of our bodies, and to give ourselves aid and support, let

it be done with all the grace and courtesy that may be.

And since the noble and the gentle in their words and deeds are as a mirror for the lower folks, for that their speech is more gracious, coming from a more delicate instrument, let us call back to memory some flowers of speech, such fair courtesies and fine replies, valiant actions and noble gifts as have in time gone by been compassed by many.

So whosoever has a noble heart and fine intelligence may imitate in time to come, and tell and make argument about them, when just occasion offers, for the use and delight of such as know them not and fain would know.

If the flowers of speech we offer you be mixed with other words, be not displeased, for black is an ornament to gold, and a fair and delicate fruit may sometimes adorn a whole orchard; a few lovely flowers an entire garden.

Nor should the many readers who have lived long without scarcely uttering a fine phrase or contributing anything of merit by their speech take offence herein.

II

Of the rich embassy which Prester John sent to the noble Emperor Frederick

Prester John,[1] most noble Indian lord, sent a rich and honourable embassy to the noble and powerful Emperor Frederick, he who was in truth a mirror to the world in matters of speech and manners, who delighted generally in fair speech and sought ever to return wise answers. The substance and intention of that embassy lay in two things alone, to prove at all hazards, if the Emperor were wise both in word and in act.

So Prester John sent him by his ambassadors three most precious stones, and said to the ambassadors: question the Emperor and ask him on my behalf to tell you what is the best thing in the world. And take good notice of his answers and speech, and study well his court and its customs, and of what you shall learn bring me word, omitting nothing at all.

[1] *Presto Giovanni* in orig. This Prester John or Prester Kan is the hero of many stories and fables. See Marco Polo.

And when they came to the Emperor to whom they had been sent by their master, they greeted him in a manner suitable to his majesty, and on behalf of their master, whom we have named, they gave him the precious stones. The Emperor took them, asking nothing of their worth. He ordered them to be taken charge of, and praised their exceeding beauty. The ambassadors asked their questions, and beheld the court and its customs.

Then after a few days, they asked permission to return. The Emperor gave them his answer and said: tell your master that the best thing in this world is moderation.

The ambassadors went away and related to their master what they had seen and heard, praising mightily the Emperor's court with its fine customs and the manners of its knights.

Prester John, hearing the account of his ambassadors, praised the Emperor and said that he was very wise in speech but not in deed, since he had not asked the value of the precious stones. He sent back his ambassadors with the offer that if it should please the Emperor they should become

senechals[1] of his court. And he made them count his riches and the number and quality of his subjects and the manners of his country.

After some time, Prester John, thinking that the gems he had given the Emperor had lost their value, since the Emperor was ignorant of their worth, called a favourite lapidary of his and sent him in secret to the Emperor's court ; saying to him : seek you in every way to bring me back those stones, whatever it may cost.

The lapidary set out, bearing with him many stones of rare beauty, and began to show them at the court. The barons and the knights came to admire his arts. And the man proved himself very clever. When he saw that one of his visitors had an office at the court, he did not sell, but gave away, and so many rings did he give away that his fame reached the Emperor. The latter sent for him, and showed him his own stones. The lapidary praised them, but temperately. He asked the Emperor if he possessed still more precious stones. Then the Emperor brought forth the three fine gems which the lapidary was

[1] Administrators, sometimes treasurers of a court.

anxious to see. Then the lapidary grew exultant, and taking one of the stones, held it in his hand and said: this gem, Sire, is worth the finest city in your land. Then he took up another and said: this gem, Sire, is worth the finest of your provinces. Then he took up the third gem and said: Sire, this stone is worth more than all your empire. He closed his hand on the gems, and the virtue in one of them rendered him invisible,[1] so that none could see him, and down the steps of the palace he went, and returned to his lord, Prester John, and presented him with the stones with great joy.

III

Of a wise Greek whom a King kept in prison, and how he judged of a courser

In the parts of Greece there was a nobleman who wore a king's crown and had a mighty realm. His name was Philip, and he held in prison a

[1] The ancients believed that certain stones and one especially called the heliotrope, had the power of rendering a person invisible.

learned Greek for some misdeed of the latter. So learned was this Greek that his intellect saw beyond the stars.

It happened one day that the king received from Spain the gift of a noble courser of great strength and perfect form. And the king called for his shoeing-smith that he might learn of the worth of the steed, and it was answered him that the wisest counsellor in all things lay in his majesty's prison.

The horse was ordered to be brought to the exercising ground, while the Greek was set free from the prison. Look over this horse for me, said the king, for I have heard that you are instructed in many things. The Greek examined the courser and said: Sire, the horse is indeed a fine one, but I must tell you that it has been reared on asses' milk. The king sent into Spain to learn how the horse had been reared, and heard that its dam having died, the foal had been reared on asses' milk. This caused the king great surprise, and he ordered that half a loaf of bread should be given to the Greek every day at the expense of the court.

Then it happened one day that the king gathered all his precious gems together, and calling the Greek out of prison, said to him: master, you are a wise fellow and understand all things. Tell me, if you know aught of precious stones, which is the rarest of all these ?

The Greek looked and said: which, Sire, is dearest to you ? The king took up a stone, beautiful above the others, and said: master, this seems to me the loveliest and of the greatest value.

The Greek took it up and laid it in his hand and closed his fingers on it, and laid it to his ear and said: Sire, there is a worm here. The king sent for his master jeweller and had the stone broken open, and found a live worm in it. Then he praised the marvellous science of the Greek, and ordered that a whole loaf of bread be given him each day at the expense of the court.

Then after many days, the king bethought himself that he was not the legitimate king. He sent for the Greek, and took him into a secret place and began to speak and said: I believe you are a master of great learning, as I have clearly seen you prove yourself in matters whereof I

have questioned you. I want you to tell me now whose son I am.

The Greek replied: you know well, Sire, you are the son of such a father. And the king said: do not answer me as you think merely to please me. Answer me truly, for if you do not I will send you to an evil death. Then the Greek spoke and said: Sire, I tell you you are the son of a baker. Then the king cried: I will learn this of my mother, and he sent for her, and with ferocious threats constrained her to speak. His mother confessed the truth.

Then the king closeted himself in a room with the Greek and said: my master, I have seen great proof of your wisdom. Tell me, I beg of you, how you knew these things. Then the Greek made answer. Sire, I will tell you. I knew that the courser was raised on asses' milk from common mother wit, since I saw that its ears drooped, which is not the nature of horses. I knew of the worm in the stone, for stones are naturally cold, and this one was warm. Warm it could not be naturally, were it not for some animal possessing life. And how did you know I was a baker's son, asked the king.

The Greek made answer: Sire, when I told you about the courser which was a marvellous thing, you ordered me the gift of half a loaf of bread a day, and when I spoke to you of the stone you gave me a whole loaf. Then it was I perceived whose son you were, for had you been the son of a king, it would have seemed a slight matter to you to give me a noble city, whereas it seemed a great thing to you to recompense me with bread as your father used to do.

Then the king perceived his meanness, and taking the Greek out of prison, made him noble gifts.

IV

How a jongleur lamented before Alexander the conduct of a knight, to whom he had made a gift on condition that the knight should give him whatsoever Alexander might present him with[1]

When Alexander was before the city of Gaza, with a vast besieging train, a noble knight escaped

[1] This story is of Oriental origin. It occurs in some versions of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

from prison. And being poorly provided in raiment and accoutrement, he set forth to see Alexander who lavished his gifts more prodigally than other lords.

As the knight walked along his way, he fell in with a gentleman of the court[1] who asked him whither he was going. The knight replied: I am going to Alexander to request some gifts from him, so that I may return with honour to my country. Then the man of the court said, what is it that you want, for I will give it to you, provided that you give me what Alexander may present you with. The knight made answer: give me a horse to ride and a beast of burden and such things and money as will suffice for me to make return to my own country. The jongleur gave him these, and they went on in company together to Alexander, who having fought a desperate action before the city of Gaza, had left the battlefield and was being relieved of his armour in a tent.

[1] *Guillare:* court minstrel, story-teller, buffoon. As these men frequented the courts of kings and nobles, they were called men of the court.

The knight and the jongleur came forward. The knight made his request to Alexander humbly and graciously. Alexander made no sign, nor did he give any reply. The knight left the man of the court and set out on the road to return to his own country.

He had not gone very far, however, when the citizens of Gaza brought the keys of the city to Alexander, submitting themselves entirely to him as their lord.

Alexander then turned to his barons and said: where is he who asked a gift of me? Then they sent for the knight who had asked the king for a gift. The knight came before the king, who said to him: take, noble knight, the keys of the city of Gaza which most willingly I give you. The knight replied: Sire, do not give me a city. I beg you rather to give me gold or silver or other things as it may please you.

Then Alexander smiled, and ordered that the knight should be given two thousand silver marks.[1] And this was set down for the smallest gift which Alexander ever made. The knight took the marks

[1] A mark had the value of four-and-a-half florins.

and handed them to the jongleur. The latter came before Alexander, and with great insistence asked that he should be heard, and so much he argued that he had the knight arrested.

And he shaped his argument before Alexander in this wise: Sire, I found this man on the road and asked him whither he was going and why, and he told me he was going to Alexander to ask a gift. I made a pact with him, giving him what he desired on condition that he should give me whatsoever Alexander should make him a present of. Therefore he has broken the pact, for he refused the noble city of Gaza, and took the marks. Therefore, before your excellency, I ask that you heed my request and order him to make up the difference between the value of the city and the marks.

The knight spoke, and first of all he confessed that the pact had been so, and then he said: just Sire, he who asks me this is a jongleur, and a jongleur's heart may not aspire to the lordship of a city. He was thinking of silver and of gold, and such was his desire. I have fully satisfied his intention. Therefore, I beg your lordship

to see to my deliverance as may please your wise counsel.

Alexander and his barons set free the knight, and complimented him on his wisdom.[1]

V

How a king committed a reply to a young son of his who had to bear it to the ambassadors of Greece.

There was a king in the parts of Egypt who had a first-born son who would wear the crown after him. The father began from the son's very earliest years to give him instruction at the hands of wise men of mature age, and never had it happened to the boy to know the games and follies of childhood.

It chanced one day that his father committed to him an answer for the ambassadors of Greece.

The youth stood in the place of discourse to make answer to the ambassadors, and the weather

[1] The story appears in the French poem of Lambert Le Tort and Alexander de Bernay, with a slight variation.

was unsettled and rainy. The boy turned his eyes to one of the palace windows, and perceived some lads gathering the rain water into little troughs and making mud pies.

The youth, on seeing this, left the platform, and running quickly down the palace stairs, went and joined the other lads who were gathering up the water, and took part in the game. The barons and knights followed him quickly, and brought him back to the palace. They closed the window, and the youth gave an answer such as was satisfactory to the ambassadors.[1]

After the council, the people went away. The father summoned philosophers and men of learning, and laid the point before them.

Some of the sages reputed it to be a matter of the lad's nature ; others suggested it portended a weakness of spirit ; some went so far as to hint it betokened an infirmity of the mind.

Thus one gave one opinion, and another another, according to their art and science.

But one philosopher said : tell me how the youth has been brought up. And they told him

[1] lit. : "gave a sufficient reply".

the lad had been brought up with sages and men of ripe age, with nothing of childishness in them.

Then the wise man answered: do not marvel if nature ask for what she has lost, for it is right for childhood to play, as it is right for age to reflect.

VI

How it came into the mind of King David to learn the number of his subjects

King David, being king by the grace of God, who had raised him from a shepherd to be a noble, wished one day to learn at all hazards the number of his subjects: which was an act of vain-glory most displeasing to the Lord, who sent an angel who spoke thus: David, you have sinned. So your Lord sends me to tell you. Will you remain three years in hell[1] or three months in the hands of His enemies which are yours, or will you leave yourself to the judgment of your Lord?

David answered: I put myself in the hands of my Lord. Let Him do with me what He will. Now what did God do? He punished him

[1] Biagi reads: *Infermo*—ill.

according to his sin, taking away by death the greater part of his people in whose great number he had vaingloried. And thus he reduced and belittled their number.

One day it came to pass that while David was riding he saw the angel of the Lord going about slaying with the naked sword, and just as the angel was about to strike a man,[1] David got off his horse and said: Highness, praise be to God, do not kill the innocent, but kill me; for the fault is all mine. Then for this good word, God pardoned the people and stayed the slaughter.[2]

VII

Here it is told how the angel spoke to Solomon, and said that the Lord God would take away the kingdom from his son for his sins.

We read of Solomon that he made another offence to God, for which he was condemned to the loss of his kingdom. The angel spoke to him

[1] This reading follows Biagi. Others give "striking as he willed".

[2] The origin of this *novella* is, of course, Kings ii, chap. 24. It is curious to notice the variations.

and said : Solomon, on account of your sins, it is meet that you should lose your realm. But our Lord sends to tell you that for the good merits of your father, He will not take it away from you in your life, but for your wrong-doing He will take it away from your son. Whereby we see the father's merits enjoyed by the son, and a father's sins punished in his child.

Be it known that Solomon laboured studiously on this earth, and with his learning and talent had a great and noble reign.

And he took provision that foreign heirs should not succeed him, that is, heirs such as were outside his lineage.

So he took many wives and many concubines that he might have many heirs, but God who is the supreme dispenser willed it that by all his wives and concubines, who were many, he had but one son.

Then Solomon made provision so as to dispose and order his kingdom under this son of his, whose name was Roboam, that for certain he should reign after him.

So from his youth upwards he ordered his

son's life with many precepts and schoolings. And more he did, so that a great treasure should be amassed and laid in a safe place.

And further he took urgent care that there was concord and peace with all the lords whose lands were near to his own, and his own vassals he held in peace and without contentions. And further he taught his son the courses of the stars and how to have mastery over demons.

And all these things he did that Roboam should reign after him.

When Solomon was dead, Roboam took counsel of wise old men, and asked their advice as to how he should manage his people.

The old men counselled him : call your people together and with sweet words say you love them as yourself, that they are as your crown, that if your father was harsh to them, you will be gentle and benign, and whereas he oppressed them, you will let them live in ease and content. If they were oppressed in the making of the temple, you will assist them.

Such was the advice the wise old men of the kingdom gave him.

Roboam went away, and called together a counsel of young men, and asked them similarly their advice. And these asked him: how did they from whom you first sought advice counsel you? And he told them word for word.

Then the young men said: they deceive you, since kingdoms are not held by words but by prowess and courage. Whence, if you speak soft words to the people, it will seem to them you are afraid of them, and so they will cast you down, and will not take you for their lord nor obey you. Listen to our counsel who are all your servants, and a master may do with his servants as he will. Tell the people with vigour and courage that they are your servants, and that whosoever disobeys you, you will punish according to your harsh law. If Solomon oppressed them for the building of the temple, you too will oppress them if it shall please you. Thus the people will not hold you for a child, but all will fear you, and so you will keep your kingdom and your crown.

Foolish Roboam followed the young men's advice. He called together his people, and spoke

harsh words to them. The people grew angry, and the chiefs became disturbed. They made secret pacts and leagues. Certain barons[1] plotted together, so that in thirty-four days after the death of Solomon, his son lost ten of the twelve parts of his kingdom through the foolish counsel of the young men.[2]

VIII

Of the gift of a king's son to a king of Syria who had been driven from his throne

A lord of Greece who possessed a mighty kingdom and whose name was Aulix had a young son whom he had taught the seven liberal arts.[3] And he instructed him in the moral life, that is the life of fine manners.

One day this king took much gold and gave it to his son and said : spend it as you like. And he

[1] The original calls them "barons," though the word sounds strange in a Biblical connection.

[2] Kings III, chap. xi.-xii.

[3] These were : grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, geometry, and algebra.

told his barons not to instruct him how to spend it, but only to observe his behaviour and his habits.

The barons, following the young man, were with him one day at the palace windows.

The youth was pensive. He saw passing along the road folk who from their dress and person seemed very noble. The road ran at the foot of the palace.

The young man ordered that all these folk should be brought before him. His will was obeyed in this, and all the passers-by came before him.

And one of them who was bolder in heart and more cheerful in look than the others, came forward and asked: Sire, what do you want of me? I would know whence you come, and what is your state.

And the man replied: Sire, I come from Italy, and a rich merchant I am, and my wealth which I have gained I did not have as patrimony, but I earned it with my labour.

The king's son asked the next man whose features were noble and who stood with timid face further off than the other, and did not dare advance so boldly.

And this man said: what do you ask of me, Sire? The youth replied: I ask you whence you come, and what is your state.

The man answered: I am from Syria and am a king, and I have acted so that my subjects have driven me out of my kingdom.

Then the youth took all the gold and silver and gave it to him who had been driven out.

The news spread through the palace.

The barons and the knights met in conclave, and at the court nothing else was spoken of but this gift of the gold.

All was related to the father, questions and answers, word for word. The king began to speak to his son, many barons being present, and said: how did you come to distribute the money in this manner? What idea was it that moved you? What reason can you offer us for not giving to him who had enriched himself through his ability, while to him who had lost through his own fault you gave all? The wise young man made answer: Sire, I gave nothing to him who taught me nothing, nor indeed did I make a gift to anyone, for what I gave was a recompense,

not a present. The merchant taught me nothing, and nothing was due to him. But he who was of my own state, son of a king who wore a king's crown, and out of his folly did so act that his subjects drove him away, taught me so much that my subjects will not drive me out. Therefore, I made a small recompense to him who taught me so much.

On hearing the judgment of the youth, the father and his barons praised his great wisdom, saying that his youth gave good promise for the years when he should be ripe to deal with matters of state.

Tidings of the happenings were spread far and wide among lords and barons, and the wise men made great disputations about it.

IX

Here it is treated of an argument and a judgment that took place in Alexandria

In Alexandria, which is in the parts of Roumania—for there are twelve Alexandrias which

Alexander founded in the March before he died[1]— in this Alexandria there are streets where the Saracens live, who make foods for sale, and the people seek out the street where the finest and most delicate foodstuffs are to be found, just as among us one goes in search of cloths.

On a certain Monday, a Saracen cook whose name was Fabrae was standing by his kitchen door, when a poor Saracen entered the kitchen with a loaf in his hand. Money to purchase viands he had none, so he held his loaf over the pot, and let the savoury steam soak into it, and ate it.

The Saracen Fabrae, who was doing a poor trade that morning, was annoyed at the action, and seized the poor Saracen, and said to him : pay me for what you have taken of mine.

The poor man answered : I have taken nothing from your kitchen save steam.[2] Pay me for what you have taken of mine, Fabrae continued to exclaim.

[1] Apart from Alexandria in Egypt, there were of course A. Troas on the sea-coast near Troy and Issum, seaport on the Syrian coast. Many of the cities so-called soon lost their names.

[2] lit. : smoke.

The dispute over this new and difficult question which had never arisen before, continued to such an extent that news of it reached the Sultan.

Owing to the great novelty of the argument, the Sultan called together a number of wise men. He laid the question before them.

The Saracen wise men began to dispute, and there were those who held that the steam did not belong to the cook, for which they adduced many good reasons. Steam cannot be appropriated, for it dissolves in the air, and has no useful substance or property. Therefore the poor man ought not to pay. Others argued that the steam was still part of the viand cooking, in fact that it belonged to it and emanated from its property, that a man sells the products of his trade, and that it is the custom for him who takes thereof to pay.

Many were the opinions given, and finally came the judgment: since this man sells his foodstuffs and you and others buy them, you must pay his viands according to their value. If for the food he sells and of which he gives the useful

properties he is accustomed to take useful money, then since he has sold steam which is the vaporous part of his cooking, you, sir, must ring a piece of money, and it shall be understood that payment is satisfied by the sound that comes therefrom.

And the Sultan ordered that this judgment be observed.[1]

X

Here it is told of a fine judgment given by the slave of Bari in a dispute between a townsman and a pilgrim

A townsman of Bari went on a pilgrimage, and left three hundred byzantines[2] to a friend on these conditions: I shall make my journey as God wills, and should I not return you will give this money for the salvation of my soul, but if I return

[1] The story appears in slightly different forms in many languages. See Lelli, *Favole*; Pappanti, *Passano ed i novellieri in prosa.*

[2] Ancient gold money of the Eastern Empire of about the same value as a ducat. It changed naturally in the course of the centuries.

within a certain time, you shall return me the money, keeping back what you will. The pilgrim went on his pilgrimage, came back at the established time and demanded his byzantines back.

His friend said : tell me over the pact again. The wanderer told it over again. You say well, quoth the friend : ten byzantines I give back to you, and two hundred and ninety I keep for myself.

The pilgrim began to get angry. What kind of faith is this ? You take away from me wrongfully what is mine.

The friend replied calmly : I do you no wrong, but if you think I do, let us go before the governors of the city. A law-suit ensued.

The Slave of Bari was the judge,[1] and heard both sides. He formulated the argument, and to him who held the money he said : give back the two hundred and ninety byzantines to the pilgrim, and the pilgrim must give you back the ten you

[1] According to Malaspina, the Slave of the Bari was "an idiot or almost one, unlettered and unread, but of great natural talent, wit and wisdom ". Ambrosoli, on the contrary, asserts that he was a certain Michele Schiavo who was a Greek governor of Bari in the tenth century.

handed him. For the pact was so; what you want you will give to me. Therefore the two hundred and ninety which you want, give them to him, and the ten you do not want, take them.

XI

Here it is told how Master Giordano was deceived by a false disciple of his

There was once a doctor whose name was Giordano, and he had a disciple. A son of the king fell ill. Master Giordano went to him, and saw that the illness could be cured. The disciple, in order to injure his master's reputation, said to the father: I see that he will certainly die.

And so disputing with his master, he made the sick youth open his mouth, and with his little finger inserted poison therein, making a great show to understand the nature of the illness from the state of the tongue.

The son died.

The master went away, and lost his reputation, while the disciple increased his.

Then the master swore that in future he would only doctor asses, and so he made physic for beasts and the lower animals.[1]

XII

Here it is told of the honour that Aminadab did to King David, his rightful lord

Aminadab, general and marshall of King David, went with a vast army of men by order of King David to a city of the Philistines.[2]

Aminadab hearing that the city would not resist long, and would soon be his, sent to King David, asking if it were his pleasure to come to the field of battle with many men, for he feared the issue of the battle.

King David started out hurriedly and went to the battlefield, and asked his marshall Aminadab : why have you made me come here ?

Aminadab answered : Sire, since the city

[1] The source of the tale is *Liber Ipocratis de infirmitibus equorum*.

[2] The city was Rabba and belonged to the Ammonites.

cannot resist longer, I wished that the glory of the victory should come to your person rather than that I should have it.

He stormed the city, and conquered it, and the glory and honour were David's.[1]

XIII

Here it is told how Antigonus reproved Alexander for having a cythera played for his delight

Antigonus, the teacher of Alexander, when one day the latter was having a cythera played for his delight, took hold of the instrument and cast it into the mud[2] and said these words: at your age it behoves you to reign and not to play the cythera. For it may be said that luxury debases the body and the country, as the sound of the cythera

[1] See *Kings* II, chap xii. The compilator has mixed up the names, confounding Aminadab with Joab. The errors or variations occuring in the Biblical themes treated in the *Novellino* have given rise to the conjecture that the stories were taken from a book of Jewish legends, the Midras Rabbolh written not later than the VIIIth century.

[2] Other readings have " fire ".

enfeebles the soul.[1] Let him then be ashamed who should reign in virtue, and instead delights in luxury.

King Porrus[2] who fought with Alexander ordered during a banquet that the strings of a player's cythera should be cut, saying: it is better to cut than to play, for virtue departs with sweet sounds.

XIV

How a king had a son of his brought up in a dark place, and then showed him everything, and how women pleased him most.

To a king a son was born.

The wise astrologers counselled that he should be kept for ten years without ever seeing the sun. So he was brought up and taken care of in a darksome cavern.

After the time had gone by, they brought him

[1] The passage is obscure, but the above would seem to be the meaning.

[2] An Indian king conquered by Alexander and afterwards turned into a friend and ally.

forth, and they set before him many fine jewels and many lovely girls, calling each thing by its name, and saying of the maidens that they were demons. Then they asked him which thing pleased him the most of all. And he answered: the demons.

At this the king marvelled mightily, saying: what a terrible thing is the tyranny and beauty of women![1]

XV

How a land steward plucked out his own eye and that of his son to the end that justice might be observed

Valerius Maximus in his sixth book narrates that Calognus[2] being steward of some land, ordered that whoever should commit a certain crime, should lose his eyes.

When a little time had passed, his own son fell into this very crime. All the people cried out for

[1] The story appears in slightly different form in several authors. See the Decameron, Cavalca's *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

[2] Other readings have *Seleucus.*

pity, and he remembering that mercy is a good and useful thing, and reflecting that no injury must be done to justice, and the love of his fellow citizens urging him, he provided that both justice and mercy should be observed.

He gave judgment and sentence that one eye be taken from his son, and one from himself.[1]

XVI

Here it is told of the great mercy wrought by Saint Paulinus the bishop.

Blessed Bishop Paulinus was so full of charity that when a poor woman asked a charity for her son who was in prison Blessed Paulinus replied : I have nothing to give to you, but do this. Lead me to the prison where your son is.

The woman led him there.

And he put himself in the hands of the prison-keepers[2] saying to them : give back her son to this good woman, and keep me in his stead.[3]

[1] Appears also in Cicero, *De Legg.* II, 6.

[2] The word in the original is *tortori*, literally torturers, though it means, of course, the keepers of the prison.

[3] Also in Saint Gregory, *Dialogues*, III, 1.

XVII

Of the great act of charity which a banker did for the love of God

Peter[1] the banker was a man of great wealth, and was so charitable that he distributed all his possessions to the poor.

Then when he had given everything away, he sold himself and gave the whole price to the poor.[2]

XVIII

Of the judgment of God on a baron of Charlemagne

Charlemagne came to the point of death while fighting the Saracens in the field, and made his testament.

Among other things he left his horse and his arms to the poor. And he left them in charge of a baron of his that he should sell them, and give the money to the poor.

[1] Peter or Piero.

[2] The story appears in Cavalca's *Vite dei Santi Padri*, and also in other forms elsewhere.

The baron kept them, however, instead of obeying. Charlemagne appeared to him and said: you have made me suffer eight generations of torment in purgatory on account of the horse and the arms which you received. But thanks be to God, I now go, purged of my sins, to heaven and you will pay dearly for your act.

Whereat, in the presence of a hundred thousand people, there descended a thunderbolt from the sky, and bore the baron away to hell.[1]

XIX

Of the great generosity and courtesy of the Young King

We read of the valour[2] of the Young King[3] in rivalry with his father through the offices of Beltram.[4]

[1] Biagi's version is a little more elaborate. The origin of the tale is to be found in the Pseudo-Turpino. See Gaspary, *History of Italian Literature.*

[2] *bontà* in original—goodness.

[3] The young King was Henry, eldest son of Henry II of England. He was often known under this title.

[4] Beltram, or Bertrand di Born.

This Beltram boasted that he had more sense than anyone else. Whence many judgments came into being, some of which are written here.

Beltram plotted with the Young King that he should persuade his father to give him his share of inheritance. And so insistent was the son that he gained his request. And he gave all away to gentlefolk and to poor knights, so that nothing remained to him and he had no more to give away.

A court player asked him for a gift. He replied that he had given all away, but this only is left me,[1] a bad tooth, and my father has promised two thousand marks to whomsoever shall prevail on me to have it taken out. Go to my father and make him give you the marks, and I will draw the tooth from my mouth at your request.

The minstrel went to the father and had the marks, and the son drew out his tooth.

On another occasion it happened that he gave two hundred marks to a gentleman. The seneschal or treasurer took the marks, and laid a carpet in a room and placed the marks

[1] This change from indirect to direct narrative occurs frequently in the *Novellino*.

beneath it, together with a bundle of cloth so that the whole should seem larger.

And the Young King going through the room, the treasurer showed him the pile saying: Sire, see how you dispense your gifts. You see what a large sum is two hundred marks, which seem nothing to you.

And the Young King looked and said: that seems little enough to me to give to so valiant a man. Give him four hundred, for I thought two hundred marks much more than they seem now I see them.[1]

XX

Of the great liberality and courtesy of the King of England

The young King of England squandered and gave away all his possessions.

Once a poor knight beheld the cover of a silver dish, and said to himself: if I could but hide that upon me, my household could thrive thereon

[1] The story of the tooth appears also in *Conti di antichi cavalieri.*

for many a day. He hid the cover on his person. The seneschal, when the dinner was ended, examined the silver, and found that the dish was missing. So they began to spread the news and to search the knights at the door.

The young King had observed him who had taken it, and came to him silently, and said to him very softly: give it to me, for I shall not be searched. And the knight all shamefaced, obeyed his behest.

Outside the door, the young King gave it back to him and hid it on him, and then he sent for him, and gave him the other half of the dish.

And his courtesy even went further; for one night some impoverished gentlemen entered his room in the belief that he was asleep. They collected his arms and clothes in order to steal them. One of them was reluctant to leave behind a rich counterpane which was covering the King, and he seized it and began to pull. The King, for fear he should remain uncovered, took hold of the end of it and held it fast, while the other tugged, and the knights present, in order to save time, lent him a hand.

And then the king spoke: this is not theft but robbery—to wit, taking by force. The knights fled when they heard him speak, for they had believed him to be sleeping.

One day, the old King, the father of this young King, took him harshly to task, saying, where is your treasure ?

And he answered: Sire, I have more than you have. There was much discussion. Both sides bound themselves to a wager.

The day was fixed when each was to show his treasure.

The young King invited all the barons of the country who were in the neighbourhood. His father set up that day a sumptuous pavilion and sent for gold and silver in dishes and plates and much armour and a great quantity of precious stones, and laid all on his carpets and said to his son: where is your treasure ? Thereupon the son drew his sword from its scabbard.

The assembled knights crowded in from the streets and the squares. The entire city seemed to be full of knights.

The King was unable to defend himself

against them. The gold remained in the power of the young King, who said to his knights : take your treasure. Some took gold, some plate, some one thing and some another, so that in a little while everything was distributed. The father gathered all his forces to take the treasure.

The son shut himself up in a castle, and Bertrand de Born was with him. The father came to besiege him.

One day through being oversure, he was struck in the head by an arrow (for he was pursued by misfortune) and killed.

But before his death he was visited by all his creditors, and they asked him for the treasure which they had lent him. Whereat the young King answered : sirs, you come at a bad season, for my treasure has been distributed. My possessions are all given away. My body is infirm, and it would be a poor pledge for you.

But he sent for a notary, and when the notary had come, that courteous king said to him : write that I bind my soul to perpetual bondage until such time as my creditors are paid. Then he died. After his death they went to his father

and asked for the money. The father answered them roughly, saying: you are the men who lent to my son wherefore he waged war upon me, and therefore under the penalty of your life and goods take yourselves out of my dominions.

Then one of them spoke and said: Sire, we shall not be the losers, for we have his soul in our keeping.

And the king asked in what way, and they showed him the document.

Then the king humbled himself and said: God forfend that the soul of so valiant a man should be in bondage for money, and he ordered them to be paid, and so it befell.

Then Bertran de Born came into his hands, and he asked for him and said: you declared you had more sense than any man in the world; now where is your sense? Bertran replied: Sire, I have lost it. And when did you lose it? I lost it when your son died.

Then the King knew that he had lost his wit for love of his son[1], so he pardoned him and loaded him with rich gifts.

[1] The passage is not clear and is probably corrupt. I have added the word "lost". For Bertran see Dante, *Inf.* XXVIII, 134, 22.

XXI

How three necromancers came to the court of the Emperor Frederick

The Emperor Frederick was a most noble sovereign, and men who had talent flocked to him from all sides because he was liberal in his gifts, and looked with pleasure on those who had any special talent.

To him came musicians, troubadours, and pleasant story-tellers, men of art[1], jousters, fencers and folk of every kind.

One day the table was set and the Emperor was washing his hands,[2] when there came to him three necromancers garbed in long pilgrims' robes.[3] They greeted him forthwith, and he asked: which of you is the master? One of them came forward and said: Sire, I am he. And the Emperor besought him that he would have the

[1] *uomini d'arti:* men of arts literally, artificers, necromancers or magicians.

[2] Seated at table in accordance with the mediæval custom.

[3] *schiavine.* Sacchetti says: "the first thing a pilgrim does when he sets out is to put on his long cloak.

courtesy to show his art. So they cast their spells and practised their arts.

The weather began to grow stormy, and a sudden shower of rain with thunder and lightning and thunder-bolts, and it seemed that a hail fell like balls of steel. The knights fled through the halls, one going in one direction, one in another.

The weather cleared up again. The necromancers[1] took their leave and asked for a recompense.

The Emperor said: ask me then. And they made their request. The Count of San Bonifazio was then near the Emperor. So they said: Sire, bid this lord come and succour us against our enemies.

The Emperor laid this command upon him with affectionate insistence. The Count set out on his way with the masters.

They took him to a noble city, showed him knights of high lineage, and prepared for him a handsome horse and fine arms, and said: these are at your command.

[1] lit.: the two masters.

The enemy came up for battle. The Count defeated them, and delivered the city. He won back the country. They gave him a wife. He had children.

After some time, he ruled the land.

The necromancers left him alone for a very long period.

Then they returned. The Count's son was already full forty years old. The Count was old. The necromancers came back and said that they wished to go and see the Emperor and the court. The Count answered: the Empire will by this time more than once have changed hands; the people will all be new: where should I return? The necromancers answered: no matter we will take you with us all the same.

They set forth; they walked for a long time; they reached the court.

They found the Emperor among his barons, still pouring water over his hands as he had been doing when the Count went away with the necromancers.

The Emperor made him tell his tale, and he told it. I have taken a wife. My children are

forty years old. Three pitched battles have I fought. The world is all topsy-turvy. How comes this ?

The Emperor made him relate all this with great mirth for the barons and knights.[1]

XXII

How the Emperor Frederick's goshawk escaped to Milan

While the Emperor Frederick was besieging Milan, one of his goshawks escaped and flew into Milan. He sent ambassadors to claim it.

The councillors called a meeting. There were very many speeches. All agreed that it would be greater courtesy to send it back than to keep it.

A very old citizen of Milan advised the authorities and spoke thus : we hold the goshawk as if it were the Emperor, so we shall make him repent of what he has done to the dominions of

[1] A similar enchantment is told of in a Turkish tale translated by *Petit de la Croix :* The Story of Sheik Schehabbedin.

Milan. Therefore I urge that it should not be returned to him.[1]

The ambassadors went back and told how the council had gone.

When the Emperor heard this, he said : how came that to pass ? Was there anyone in Milan to contradict the proposal of the council ? And the ambassadors said : yes Sire, there was. And what manner of man was he ? Sire, he was an old man.

It cannot be, replied the Emperor that an old man could make so vile a speech. None the less, Sire, so it was. Tell me, said the Emperor, what manner of man he was and how garbed. Sire, his hair was white, and his coat was striped.[2]

It may well be, said the Emperor, that since his coat was striped he was a madman.

[1] An immense importance was attached to a good hawk at this time.

[2] To wear striped cloth was considered unsuitable for a serious man. Fantastic clothing of almost any kind was the property of the court buffoons, story-tellers and the whole world of mediæval Bohemianism.

XXIII

How the Emperor Frederick found a countryman at a fountain and asked leave to drink, and how he took away his drinking-cup

Once when the Emperor Frederick went hunting, dressed, as was his wont, in plain green, he came upon a countryman at a fountain who had spread a gleaming white cloth on the green grass, and had a cup made of tamerisk[1] and a nice clean loaf of bread.[2]

The Emperor came up and asked leave to drink. The countryman replied: with what should I give you to drink? You shall not set your lips to this cup. If you have a drinking horn, I will gladly give you some wine.

The Emperor answered: lend me your cup, and I will drink so that it does not touch my mouth. And the countryman handed it to him, and he kept to his promise. He did not give it

[1] *tamarix gallica*, a wood supposed to have medicinal properties.

[2] or else *good clean food*.

back though, but on the contrary, spurred his horse and ran off with the cup.

The countryman was confident that the man was one of the Emperor's knights.

The following day he went to the court. The Emperor told his servants if such and such a countryman come, let him in, and do not close the door to him. The countryman came. He appeared before the Emperor. He complained of the loss of his cup. The Emperor made him tell his story many times to his great amusement.

The barons listened to it with glee. And the Emperor said: would you recognise your cup? Yes, Sire. Then the Emperor drew forth the cup to show that it had been he in person.

Then the Emperor, because of the man's cleanliness, gave him rich gifts.

XXIV

How the Emperor Frederick put a question to two wise men, and how he rewarded them.

The Emperor Frederick had two exceedingly

wise men about him; one was called Bolgaro the other Martino.[1]

One day the Emperor was in the company of these two wise men, one of them on his right hand, and the other on his left.

And the Emperor put a question to them and said: can I give to any one of my subjects and take away from another, according to my will and without other cause? Since I am their lord, and the law says that what pleases the lord shall be law to his subjects. Say then whether I may do this, since such is my pleasure.

One of the two wise men replied: Sire, whatever is your pleasure, that you may do to your subjects without causing wrong.

The other sage answered and said: to me it seems not, since the law is utterly just, and its conditions must be observed and followed with an extreme nicety. When you take away, it should be known from whom and also to whom you give.

[1] The incident is apparently historical, and the Emperor, is Barbarossa. The wise men or *savi* being Bolgaro or Bulgaro and Martino, sometimes called Gossia. The story seems to confuse two separate episodes in the life of the Emperor. The titles are different in the versions of Gualteruzzi and Borghini.

Since both of the wise men spoke the truth, he offered gifts to both. To the one he gave a scarlet hat and a white palfrey; and to the other he gave the right to make a law to please his fancy.

Whence there arose a great discussion among the learned as to which of the two he had given the richer present.

It was held that to him who had said he could give and take away as it pleased him he had given clothing and a palfrey as to a minstrel because he had flattered him. To him who followed justice, he gave the right to make a law.

XXV

How the Sultan gave two hundred marks to a man and how his treasurer wrote down the entry in his presence

Saladin[1] was a most noble lord, brave and generous. Once he gave two hundred marks to a man who had given him a basket of winter roses

[1] Selah-eddyn (1137-93), Sultan of Egypt, after 1174 famous throughout medieval Christendom for his knightliness. He is one of the chief characters of Scott's *Talisman*.

grown in a hot-house. His treasurer wrote down the sum in his presence, and through a slip of the pen he wrote three hundred marks. Saladin said: what are you doing? The treasurer answered: Sire, I have blundered, and he was about to cancel the surplus. Then Saladin spoke: do not cancel it; write four hundred instead. It would be ill for me were your pen more generous than I.

This Saladin, at the time of his sultanate, ordered a truce between himself and the Christians, and said he would like to behold our customs, and if they pleased him, he would become a Christian.

The truce was made.

Saladin came in person to study the habits of the Christians; he beheld the tables set for eating with dazzlingly white cloths, and he praised them exceedingly.

And he beheld the disposition of the table where the King of France ate, set apart from the others.

And he praised it highly. He saw the places where the great ones of the realm ate, and he praised them highly.

He saw how the poor ate on the ground in humility, and this he disapproved greatly.

Moreover, he blamed them for that the lord's friends ate more lowly and further down the table.

Then the Christians went to see the customs of the Saracens, and saw that they ate on the ground grossly.

The Sultan had his pavilion, where they ate, richly draped and the ground covered with carpets which were closely worked with crosses.

The stupid Christians entered, stepping with their feet on these crosses and spitting upon them as on the ground.

Then the Sultan spoke and took them to task harshly: do you preach the Cross and scorn it thus? It would seem then that you love your God only with show of words and not with deeds. Your behaviour and your manners do not meet with my liking.

The truce was broken off, and the war began again.[1]

[1] The second part of this tale is to be found in the *Cronaca* of Turpino, and in F. Sacchetti's 125th tale.

XXVI

Here it is told of a burgher of France

A burgher of France had a wife who was extremely fair.

Once she was at a festival with other women of the city. And there was present a very beautiful woman who was much looked at by all. The burgher's wife said to herself: if I had so fine a tunic as she has, I should be no less looked at than she is.

She returned home to her husband and showed him a cross face.

Her husband asked her frequently why she was so aggrieved. And the woman replied: because I am not dressed so that I can be with other women. For at such and such a feast, the other women who were not so fair as I am were looked at, but I was not for my ugly tunic.[1]

Then her husband promised her that with his first earnings he would buy her a fine tunic.

[1] *cotta*. This antiquated form has survived in the *cotta* which priests put on during certain religious ceremonies of the Catholic Church.

But a few days passed when a burgher came to him and asked for the loan of ten marks. And he offered him a gain of two marks at a certain date. The husband replied : I will have none of it, for my soul would be in danger of hell fire. And the wife said : Oh, you disloyal traitor, you will not do it so that you need not buy me my tunic.

Then the burgher, through the urgings of his wife, lent the money for an interest of two marks, and bought his wife the tunic. The wife went to mass with the other women.

At that time there lived Merlin.

And one man spoke and said : by Saint John, that is a most fair lady.

And Merlin, the wise prophet, spoke and said : truly she is fair, if only the enemies of God did not share that tunic with her.

And the lady turned and said : tell me in what way the enemies of God have a share in my tunic.

He answered : lady, I will tell you. Do you remember when you went to a certain feast, where the other women were more regarded than you because of your ugly tunic ? And you returned

and showed yourself cross to your husband? And he promised to buy you a tunic with his first earnings? And a few days afterwards, a burgher came to borrow ten marks, at a usury of two, whereon you urged your husband to do this? So from this ungodly gain does your tunic come. Tell me, lady, if I have erred in aught.

Certainly, sir, in naught have you erred, answered the lady. And God forbid that such an ungodly tunic should remain upon me.

And before the whole crowd she doffed it, and begged Merlin to take it and deliver her from such grievous peril.

XXVII

Here it is told of a great Moaddo who was insulted

A great Moaddo[1] went one day to Alexandria, and was going about his business when another man came behind him, and pronounced many

[1] The meaning of this word is uncertain. Probably it is a kind of Oriental wise man from the Arabic *Muaddab*, meaning sage or wise man. There are several conjectures on this point. Another reading is *Mago*, mage.

insulting words, and made much mock of him, to which he did not reply a word.

So a man came forward and said: why do you not answer this fellow who addresses you so villainously?

And he patiently replied: and said to the man who urged him to make answer. I do not answer because I do not hear anything pleasing to me.

XXVIII

Here it is told of a custom that existed in the kingdom of France

It was the custom in the kingdom of France that a man who deserved to be dishonoured and condemned should go in a cart.

And if it happened that he was condemned to death, never was found anyone willing to converse with him or stay with him for any reason.

Lancelot[1] when he became mad for love of Queen Guinevre went in the cart, and was driven to many places.

And from that day on the cart was no more

[1] Lancelot of the Lake.

despised, and ladies and knights of fine birth go in it now for their disport.

Alas! errant world and ignorant and discourteous people, how much greater was Our Lord who made the heaven and earth, than Lancelot who was made a knight[1] and changed and upset so great a usance in the kingdom of France, which was not his kingdom.

And Jesus Christ, Our Lord, pardoning His own enemies could not make men pardon theirs.

And this He did and willed in His kingdom to those who crucified Him.

He pardoned them, and prayed to His Father for them.

XXIX

Here it is told how some learned astrologers disputed about the Empyrean

Some very learned men at a school in Paris were disputing about the Empyrean[2], and spoke

[1] *cavaliere di scudo* in the original. Sacchetti says *cavalieri di scudo* were those made knights by lords or by the people.

[2] The Empyrean is the seventh and outermost Heaven of Paradise.

of it with great longing and how it was above the other heavens.

They spoke of the heaven where Jupiter is and Saturn and Mars, and that of the Sun and of Mercury and the Moon. And how that above all was the Empyrean. And above that is God the Father in all His majesty.

As they were thus conversing, there came to them a fool who said to them : gentlemen, what is there over the head of that gentleman ?[1] One of the learned men answered jestingly : There is a hat. And the fool went away, and the wise men remained. One of them said : you think you have given the fool a rebuff, but it is we who have suffered it[2]. Now let us say : what is there overhead ?[3] They put all their science to a test, but could find no answer. Then they said : a fool is he who is so bold as to put his mind outside the circle.[4] And still more foolish

[1] (sitting there). This novella is particularly abrupt and characteristic in its elliptical constructions.

[2] An untranslatable play on words : *Cappello* meaning *hat* and also sometimes *rebuff, snub.*

[3] lit. : *over head what is ? sopra capo che ha ?*

[4] The circle that limits human knowledge.

and rash is he who toils and meditates to discover his own origin[1].

And quite without sense is he who would know God's profoundest thoughts.

XXX

Here it is told how a Lombard knight squandered his substance

A knight of Lombardy, whose name was G—— was a close friend of the Emperor Frederick, and had no sons to whom to leave his estate, although indeed he had heirs of his own kin. So he formed the resolve to spend all he possessed during his life-time, that nothing should be left after him.

He reckoned the number of years he might live, and added another ten. But he did not add enough, for wasting and squandering his goods, he was surprised by old age, and lived too long, and found himself in poverty, for he had squandered his all.

He took counsel for his sad state, and remembered the Emperor Frederick, who had shown

[1] The First Cause, or the Divinity.

him much friendship, and who had always spent much and given away much at his court.

He resolved to go to him, believing that he would be received with great affection[1].

So he went to the Emperor, and stood before him. He (the Emperor) asked who he was, although he knew him well. The knight told his name. He asked about his conditions. The knight told what had happened to him, and how he had been outwitted by time.

The Emperor replied: leave my court, and do not under penalty of your life, come into my territory again, for you are he who did not want that others should inherit aught after your death.

XXXI

Here it is told of a story-teller of Messer Azzolino

Messer Azzolino[2] had a story-teller whom he made tell him tales during the long nights of

[1] Another reading is "honour": *onore* instead of *amore*.

[2] Azzolino or Ezzelino da Romano, born 1194, died 1259 in battle against the Milanese. Known as tyrant of Padua and the Marca Trevigiana. Dante (*Inf.* XII, 110, and *Par.* IX, 29) places him among the tyrants.

winter. It happened that one night the story-teller had a great desire to sleep, while Azzolino urged him to tell tales.

The story-teller began a tale of a countryman who had a hundred byzantines[1] of his own which he took with him to the market to buy sheep at the price of two per byzantine. Returning with his sheep he came to a river he had passed before much swollen with the rains which had recently fallen. Standing on the bank, he saw a poor fisherman with a boat, but of so small a size that there was only room for the countryman and one sheep at a time. Then the countryman began to cross over with one sheep, and he began to row: the river was wide. He rowed and passed over.

And here the story-teller ceased his tale.

Azzolino said: go on! And the story-teller replied: let the sheep cross over and then I will tell you the tale. Since the sheep would not have crossed in a year, he could meanwhile sleep at his ease.[2]

[1] Ancient coin belonging to the Eastern Empire.

[2] Appears elsewhere in slightly different forms. See Don Quixote and *Disciplina clericalis.*

XXXII

Of the great deeds of prowess of Riccar Loghercio of the Isle

Riccar Loghercio was Lord of the Isle, and was a great gentleman of Provence, and a man of great courage and prowess.

And when the Saracens came to attack Spain, he was in that battle called the Spagnata, the most perilous battle that there has been since that of the Greeks and the Trojans. Then were the Saracens in great number, with many kinds of engines, and Riccar Loghercio was the leader of the first battalion. And as the horses could not be put in the van for fear of the engines, he bade his followers turn the hindquarters of their horses towards the enemy ; and they backed so long that they found themselves in the enemy's midst.

And so the battle proceeded and they continued to slay right and left, so that they utterly destroyed the enemy.

And when, on another occasion, the Count of Toulouse was fighting against the Count of

Provence, Riccar Loghercio descended from his steed, and mounted on a mule, and the Count said: What does this mean, Riccar? Messer, I wish to show that I am good neither for pursuit nor for flight.

Herein he showed his great liberality, which was greater in him than in any other knight.[1]

XXXIII

Here is told a tale of Messer Imberal del Balzo

Messer Imberal del Balzo[2] had a great castle in Provence, and he made much account of auguries as the Spaniards do, and a philosopher, whose name was Pythagoras and came from Spain[3], wrote an astronomical table, in which were

[1] It has been suggested that this *Riccar dell' Illa* was a *Riccar di Lilla*, Lille, in Flanders.

[2] En Barral, or Sire Barral, lord of the noble house of Balzo in Provence. He was a lover of letters, philosophy and the arcane arts.

[3] The famous philosopher, reputed the founder of mathematics, was not born in Spain but in Samos. This is another of the numerous instances of the fantastic geographical and historical notions of the compiler of the *Novellino*.

many meanings of animals, according to the twelve signs of the zodiac. When birds quarrel. When a man finds a weasel in the road. When the fire sings, and many meanings of jays and magpies and crows and of many other animals, according to the moon.

And so Messer Imberal, riding one day with his company, was taking great care to avoid these birds, for he feared to encounter an augury. He found a woman on his path, and asked her and said: tell me, good woman, whether you have this morning found or seen any birds such as crows, ravens or magpies.

And the woman answered: Sir, I saw a crow on the trunk of a willow tree. Now tell me, woman, in what direction was it holding its tail? And the woman replied: Sir, it held it turned towards its behind.[1] Then Messer Imberal feared the augury, and said to his companions: before God, I will ride no more to-day nor to-morrow in the face of this augury.

And often was this tale told in Provence, because

[1] Imberal expect her to say towards which of the cardinal points the bird's tail was turned.

of the novel reply which that woman had inadvertently given.

XXXIV

How two noble knights loved each other with a great love

Two noble knights loved each other with a great love. The name of one was Messer G—— and the name of the other Messer S——.

These two knights had long loved each other.

Then one of them began to think and say to himself in this wise : Messer S. has a fine palfrey. Were I to ask him, would he give it me ? And so thinking, would he or would he not, he came to believe at last that he would not. The knight was much disturbed.

And he began to encounter his friend with a strange manner. And, thinking over the thing every day, he grew more and more glum. He ceased to speak to his friend and turned the other way when he met him.

The people wondered greatly, and he wondered too greatly himself.

It chanced one day that Messer S., he who owned the palfrey, could bear it no longer. He went to his friend and said: my friend, why do you not speak to me? Why are you angry? The other replied: because I asked you for your palfrey and you denied it me.

And the other replied: that was never so. It cannot be. The palfrey and my own person are yours, for I love you as myself.

Then the knight became reconciled with his friend and he turned to the old amity, and recognised that he had not thought well[1].

XXXV

Here it is told of Master Thaddeus of Bologna

Master Thaddeus, as he was instructing his medical scholars, propounded that whoever should continue for nine days to eat egg-plant[2] would go mad.

[1] This novel probably derives from the ascetic or ecclesiastical collections and purports to show the dangers of too lively a fantasy on the morals.

[2] *Solanum insanum.* Another reading is *melon.*

And he proved it according to the law of psychic[1].

One of his scholars, hearing this lesson, decided to put it to the test. He began to eat egg-plant, and at the end of nine days went before his master and said: master, that lesson you read us is not true, because I have put it to the test, and I am not mad.

And he rose and showed him his behind.

Write, said the master, that all this about the egg-plant has been proved, and he wrote a fresh essay on the subject.

XXXVI

Here it is told how a cruel king persecuted the Christians

There was once a most cruel king[2] who persecuted God's people. And his power was passing great, and yet he could achieve nothing against that people, for God loved them.

[1] Medicine or science.

[2] Balak, son of Zippor, king of the Moabites; see Numbers, chaps. 22 and 23.

This king spoke with Balaam the prophet, and said: tell me, Balaam, how comes this matter with my foes? Am I indeed more powerful than they, and yet can do them no harm?

And Balaam answered: Sire, because they are God's people. But I will do in this way, that I will go unto them and will curse them, and you shall attack them and shall win the victory.

So this Balaam mounted his ass, and went up on to a mountain.

The people were almost all down in the valley; and he went up to curse them from the mountain[1].

Then the angel of God went before him, and did not let him pass. And he pricked his ass, thinking it was frightened, and it spoke and said: do not beat me, for I see here the angel of the Lord with a sword of fire in his hand, and he will not let me pass.

Then the prophet Balaam looked and beheld the angel. And the angel spoke and said: why are you going to curse God's people. You shall bless them straightaway, just as you desired to curse them, unless you wish to die.

[1] The high places of Baal: Numbers xxii, 41.

The prophet went and blessed God's people, and the king said: what do you do? This is not cursing.

And he replied: it cannot be otherwise, for the angel of the Lord so bade me. Therefore, do in this way[1]. You have beautiful women: they have a lack of them. Take a number of them and dress them richly and set on their breasts a buckle[2] of gold or silver for an ornament, on which let there be carved the idol which you adore (for he adored the statue of Mars) and you will speak to them as follows: that they do not yield unless the men promise to adore that image and figure of Mars. And then when they have sinned, I shall be free to curse them.

And so the king did.

He took some fair women in that manner, and sent them into the camp.

The men were desirous of them, and they

[1] This second part of the story is of course in contradiction to the Biblical account. Another instance of extra-Biblical sources of the Old Testament tales in the *Novellino*.

[2] Another reading is "set on their breasts a fly", reading *mosca* fly, for *nosca*, buckle.

consented and adored the idols and then sinned with them.

Then the prophet went and cursed God's people, and God did not succour them.

And that king gave battle, and defeated them all.

Wherefore the just suffered the penalty of those who sinned. They repented and atoned and drove away the women, and became reconciled to God and returned to their former freedom.

XXXVII

Here it is told of a battle between two kings of Greece

There were two kings in the parts of Greece, and one of them was more powerful than the other. They went into battle together: the more powerful one lost.

He went home and shut himself into a room, wondering if he had not dreamed, and soon began to believe he had not fought at all.

Meanwhile the angel of God came to him, and said: how are you? Of what are you thinking? You have not dreamed, but have fought indeed and were beaten.

And the king looked upon the angel and said: how can that be? I had thrice as many troops as he; and the angel replied: and yet it has come to pass, since you are an enemy of God.

Then the king replied: oh, is my enemy then such a friend of God that he has beaten me for that reason?

No, said the angel, for God revenges Himself upon His enemies by means of His enemies. Go you once more with your army, and you shall defeat him even as he defeated you.

Then he went and fought anew with his foe, and defeated him and captured him as the angel had foretold.

XXXVIII

Of an astrologer called Melisus, who was reprimanded by a woman

There was one named Melisus[1] who was exceedingly learned in many sciences and especially

[1] It would appear that the compiler of the *Novellino* is referring to Thales of Miletus, one of the seven wise men of Greece, who lived 639-564 B.C.

in astrology, as can be read in the sixth book of De Civitate Dei[1].

And it is said that this wise man once passed the night in the house of a poor woman.

When he went to his rest in the evening, he said to the woman: look you, woman, leave the house door open to-night, for I am accustomed to get up and study the stars.

The woman left the door open.

That night it rained, and before the house there was a ditch filled with water.

When the wise man rose, he fell into it. He began to cry for help. The woman asked: what is the matter? He answered: I have fallen into a ditch. Oh you poor fellow, said the woman, you gaze up at the sky and cannot mind your feet.

The woman got up and helped him, for he was perishing in a little ditch of water from absentmindedness.[2]

[1] St Augustine speaks of Thales in Book VIII, not Book VI.

[2] The original version of this anecdote is to be found in Diogenes Laertius, Book I. See also Æsop's fable of the Astronomer.

XXXIX

Here it is told of Bishop Aldebrandino, and how he was mocked by a friar

When Bishop Aldebrandino[1] was living in his Palace at Orvieto, he was at table one day, in the company of various Franciscans, and there being one of them who was eating an onion with much relish ; the Bishop watching him, said to a page : Go to that friar, and tell him that gladly would I change stomachs with him.

The page went and told him.

And the friar answered : go, and tell Messere that I well believe he would change with me, with regard to his stomach, but not with regard to his bishopric.

XL

Of a minstrel whose name was Saladin[2]

Saladin was a minstrel who, being in Sicily one day at table with many knights, was washing

[1] Fra Aldobrandino, a Dominican of the noble family of the Cavalcanti. He was the Pope's Vicar in Rome during his absence at the Council of Lyons, having been made a Bishop in 1271.

[2] Perhaps Saladin of Pavia is meant, a poet who lived about 1250.

his hands ; and a knight said to him : wash your mouth and not your hands.

And Saladin replied : Messer, I have not spoken of you to-day.

Then as they were strolling about, to rest after eating, Saladin was questioned by another knight, who said : tell me, Saladin, if I wished to tell a story of mine, to whom must I tell it as being the wisest amongst us ? Saladin answered : Messer, tell it to whoever appears to you to be the most foolish.

The knights questioned this answer, and begged him to expatiate upon it.

Saladin replied : to fools every fool appears wise because of his resemblance.

Therefore whoever appears most foolish to a fool, will be the wisest, because wisdom is the contrary of folly. To every fool wise men seem fools. Therefore to wise men fools seem truly foolish and full of doltishness.

XLI

A tale of Messer Polo Traversaro

Messer Polo Traversaro[1] came from Romagna, and was the greatest noble in all that land, and he ruled over almost all of it without opposition.

There were three very swaggering knights, and they held that in all Romagna there was no man worthy to sit with them as a fourth in company.

And so in their meeting-place they had a bench for three, and more could not be seated thereon, and no one dared to seat himself there for fear of their truculence.

And although Messer Polo was their superior and in other things, they were obedient to his commands, yet in that desirable place he did not dare to sit. They admitted, however, that he was the first lord of Romagna and the one who came nearest of all to making a fourth in their company.

What did the three knights do, seeing that

[1] Paolo, or Paul. The Traversaro family was one of the principal families of Ravenna. See Dante, *Purg.* XIV, 98 and 107. Also Boccaccio, *Decameron*, Giorno X, Nov. 8.

Messer Polo was pressing them hard? They walled up half the door of their palace so that he could not enter[1]. For the man was of a very stout build. Not being able to enter, he undressed and went in in his shirt.

When they heard him, they got into their beds, and had themselves covered up as though they were ill.

Messer Polo, who had thought to find them at table, discovered them in bed. He comforted them, and interrogated them, and inquired as to their ailments, and perceiving everything, took his leave and went away.

The knights said: this is no joke!

They went to the village of one of their number where he had a beautiful little castle with moats and a draw-bridge.

They decided to winter there. One day Messer Polo went thither with a numerous company, and when they wanted to enter, the three knights raised the bridge. Say what they would, they did not succeed in entering.

So they went away.

[1] Following the reading of Biagi.

When the winter had passed, the knights returned to the city.

Messer Polo, at their return, did not rise, and they were astonished, and one of them said: O Messer, alack, is this the courtesy you show? When strangers come to your city, do you show them no honour?

And Messer Polo replied: pardon me, gentle sirs, if I do not rise save for the bridge that rose for me.

Then the knights made much of him.

One of the knights died, and the other two sawed off the third of the bench on which they sat, when the third was dead, because in all Romagna they could not find any knight who was worthy to sit in his place.

XLII

Here is told an excellent tale of William of Borganda of Provence

William of Borganda[1] was a noble knight of

[1] Or "Bergdam".

Provence in the days of Count Raymond Berenger[1].

One day it came to pass that some knights were boasting[2] and William boasted that there was no nobleman in Provence whom he had not knocked from his saddle, and then he said that *there was no woman in Provence who deserved the honour of a tournament*[3]. And this he said in the Count's presence. And the Count answered: does that include me too? William replied: yes, you, my lord; I say it to you.

He sent for his horse, saddled and well caparisoned, attached his spurs, and set his feet in the stirrups, and when he was ready, he turned to the Count and said: you sir, I neither include nor accept[4]. And he mounted his horse and

[1] The last count of Provence, who died in 1245. See Dante, *Par.* VI, 135.

[2] The boasts of the knights figure greatly in knightly legend and story.

[3] Underlined so in the original.

[4] Orig.: *ne metto, ne traggo. I do not put you among the number of knights defeated by me nor do I exclude you from them.* In other words: *I don't know what to make of you.* The tale is probably corrupt in the MS.

spurred it and went off. The Count was so sore grieved that he did not return to the court.

One day some ladies were gathered together for a splendid banquet; and they sent for William of Borganda, and the Countess was there and they said: now tell us, William, why you have so insulted the ladies of Provence? It shall cost you dear.

Each one of them had a stick hidden away.

The one who acted as spokeswoman said: lo! William for your folly it behoves you to die.

And William spoke, and said, seeing that he was taken unawares in such a fashion: I beg you, ladies, by your courtesy that you grant me one favour. The ladies answered: ask, save that you ask not to escape.

Then William spoke and said: ladies, I beg you of your courtesy that whoever among you be the greatest hussy be the first to strike me.

Then they looked at one another: no one was found willing to deal the first blow, and so on that occasion he got away unscathed[1].

[1] The story is told of other knights in several different places. See *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry*.

XLIII

Here it is told of Messer Giacopino Rangone and what he did to a court player

Messer Giacopino Rangone[1], a noble knight of Lombardy, being one day at table, had two flasks of very fine white and red wine before him.

A buffoon being at the table, did not dare to ask for some of the wine, much as he desired to. Getting up, and taking a beaker, he washed it well and ostentatiously. Then when he had washed it, he flourished it in his hand and said: sire, I have washed it.

And Messer Giacopino put his hand into the glass and said: Well you can complete your toilet[2] somewhere else.

The buffoon remained there and had no wine.

Giacopino Rangone, son of Gherardo, was *podestà* (governor) of Bologna in 1240. Also possibly at Cremona. There are doubts as to the personality of the Giacopino referred to here.

[2] lit.: *do your combing elsewhere.*

XLIV

Of a question that was put to a courtier

Marco Lombardo[1] was a noble courtier and extremely wise. One Christmas he was in a city, where they distributed many gifts, and he received none. He found another courtier who was an ignorant man compared with him, and yet he had received many presents. This gave rise to a good remark, for that courtier said to Marco: how is this, Marco, that I have received seven gifts and you none? And yet you are far superior to me and wiser. What is the reason?

And Marco replied: only this, that you found more of your kind than I of mine.

XLV

How Lancelot fought at a fountain

Sir Lancelot was fighting one day at a fountain with a knight of Sansonia[2] whose name was

[1] Marco Lombardo is mentioned by Dante (*Purg.* XVI, 46).

[2] Saxony?

Aliban; and they fought keenly, with their swords, dismounted from their horses.

And when they paused to draw breath, they asked one another's names.

Sir Lancelot replied: since you desire to hear my name, know that I am called Lancelot.

Then the combat began once more, and the knight spoke to Lancelot, and said: your name is deadlier to me than your prowess.

For when he knew that the knight was Lancelot, he began to mistrust his own worth.

XLVI

Here it is told how Narcissus fell in love with his own image

Narcissus[1] was a valiant knight of great beauty.

One day it befell that he was resting beside a lovely fountain. And in the water he beheld his own most beautiful image. And he began to gaze upon it, and rejoiced in seeing it in that fountain; and he thought that the image had a

[1] *Narcis* in the text.

life of its own, that it was in the water, and did not perceive that it was but an image of himself. He began to love it, and to fall so deeply in love with it, that he wished to seize it.

And the water grew troubled, and the image vanished, wherefore he began to weep.

And the water became clear once more, and he beheld the image weeping.

Then he let himself slip into the fountain, so that he drowned.

The season was spring-time.

Some women came to the fountain for sport. They saw the fair Narcissus drowned. They drew him from the fountain with great lamentation, and set him by its rim.

The news of it came to the God of Love.

Wherefore the God of Love made of him a most lovely and verdant almond tree, and it was and is the first tree that bears fruit and renews the time for loving.[1]

[1] The almond is the first tree to blossom but not to bear fruit. In Ovid (*Metam.* III) Narcissus is, of course, changed into the flower that bears his name.

XLVII

Here it is told how a knight asked a lady for her love

A knight once begged a lady for her love, and told her among other things that he was noble and rich and passing fair. And your husband is so ugly, as you know.

And that husband was behind the wall of the room. He spoke and said: Messer, by your courtesy further your own affairs, but do not mar those of other men.

Messer di Val Buona was the ugly man. And Messer Rinieri da Calvoli was the other.[1]

XLVIII

Here it is told of King Conrad, father of Conradin

We read of King Conrad[2] that when he was a boy he enjoyed the company of twelve boys of his

[1] These two knights are mentioned by Dante in the 14th Canto of the *Purgatorio*, vv. 88-90 and 97.

[2] Conrad IV of Svevia, son of Frederick II, elected Emperor of Germany in 1250, came to Italy to take possession of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

own age. Whenever King Conrad was at fault, the masters who were entrusted with his care did not beat him, but they beat those boys who were his companions. And he would say: Why do you beat these boys? The masters answered: Because of your misdemeanours. And he said: Why do you not beat me, for I am to blame? And the masters answered: Because you are our lord. But we beat them in your place. Wherefore sorely should you be grieved if you have a gentle heart, that others pay the penalty of your faults.

And therefore, we are told, King Conrad took great heed not to act wrongly, for of pity them.

XLIX

Here it is told of a physician of Toulouse and how he took to wife a niece of the Archbishop of Toulouse

A physician of Toulouse took to wife a gentlewoman of Toulouse, niece to the Archbishop. He took her home. In two months she was about to give birth to a daughter. The

physician showed no anger. On the contrary, he comforted the woman, and showed her reasons, in accordance with science, that the child could well be his.

And with these words and with a show of friendliness he prevented the woman from thwarting his purpose. He showed her every attention during the child-birth.

After her travail, he said to her: Madonna, I have honoured you as much as I could. Now I beg you by the love you bear me, to return home to your father's house. And your daughter I will hold in all honour.

Matters went so far, that the Archbishop heard that the physician had sent his niece away. He sent for him, and as he was a great man, he addressed him with very high words, mingled with scorn and menaces.

And when he had had his say, the physician replied and said: Messer, I took your niece to wife, thinking, with my riches, to be able to supply and nourish my family; and it was my intention to have a son every year, and no more. Whereas the woman has begun to give birth after two

months. For this reason I am not sufficiently opulent, if things are to continue in this way, to be able to nourish them all; and for you it would not be decorous that your kindred should live in poverty. Wherefore I beg you humbly, to give her to a man wealthier than I am, so that she may be no dishonour to you.

L

Here it is told of Master Francis, son of Master Accorso of Bologna

Master Francis, son of Master Accorso of the city of Bologna,[1] when he returned from England, where he had long sojourned, put this problem to the municipality of Bologna, and said: the father of a family left his town in poverty and abandoned his sons, and went into remote parts. After a certain time, he saw some men of his own country. Prompted by love of his children, he questioned them, and they replied: Messer, your children

[1] Francis, son of the famous jurist of Florence, Accorso da Bagnolo, was professor of Civil Law in the University of Bologna. He went to England at the request of Edward I, where he remained until 1281. See Dante, *Inferno*, XV, 110.

have had great gains, and are grown rich. When he heard this, he decided to depart and returned home. He found his sons rich. He asked them to reinstate him in his possessions as their father and lord. The sons refused, saying: father we have earned this: it has naught to do with you. So that there came about a law-suit.

Now, in accordance with the law, the father became master of all the sons had earned. And so I ask of the commune of Bologna that the possessions of my sons come under my keeping, that is the possessions of my scholars. For they have become great masters, and have earned much since I left them.

May it please the commune of Bologna, now that I have returned, to make me once more master and father, in obedience to the law which treats of the father of a family.

LI

Here it is told of a Gascon woman, and how she had recourse to the King of Cyprus

There was a Gascon woman in Cyprus, who suffered such a villainous and shameful offence

that she could not endure it[1]. So she went before the King of Cyprus[2] and said: Sire, you have already suffered ten thousand insults, and I only one. I beg you who have borne so many, pray teach me how to bear mine.

The King was ashamed, and began to avenge his wrongs, and not to endure others.

LII

Of a bell that was ordered in King John's days

In the days of King John of Acre[3] a bell was hung for anyone to ring who had received a great wrong, whereupon the King would call together the wise men appointed for this purpose, in order that justice might be done.

It happened that the bell had lasted a long time and the rope had wasted, so that a vine clung to it.

[1] *Guasca*, a woman from Gascony.

[2] The reference may be to Guido di Lusignano, fourth son of Hugh VII. Called to the throne of Jerusalem in 1186, he was soon made prisoner by Saladin. He ceded his title, when released to King Richard of England, receiving in exchange the kingdom of Cyprus.

[3] Or Atri. See Longfellow's poem *The Bell of Atri*.

Now it befell that a knight of Acre had a noble charger which had grown old, so that it had lost its worth, and the knight, to avoid the expense of its keep, let it wander about. The famished horse tugged at the vine to eat it. As it tugged, the bell rang.

The judges assembled, and understood the petition of the horse who, it seemed, asked for justice. They sentenced that the knight whom the horse had served when it was young, should feed it now that it was old.

The King commanded him to do so under grave penalties.

LIII

Here it is told of a privilege granted by the Emperor to one of his barons

The Emperor granted a privilege to one of his barons, that whosoever should pass through his lands should pay him a penny as toll-traverse for each manifest physical defect. The baron set a gate-keeper at his door to gather the tolls.

One day it befell that a one-footed man came to the gate: the gate-keeper asked him for a penny. The man refused and began to pick a quarrel with him. The keeper took hold of him.

The man, in order to defend himself, drew forth the stump of his arm, for he had lost one hand.

When the keeper saw this, he said: you shall now pay me two pence, one for the hand, and one for the foot. So they went on fighting. The man's hat fell off his head. He had only one eye. The keeper said: you shall pay me three pence. They took hold of each other by the hair. The keeper felt his head: it was scabby. The keeper said: now you shall pay me four pence.

So he who could have passed on without a quarrel, instead of one penny had to pay four.[1]

LIV

Here it is told how the parish priest Porcellino was accused

A parish priest who was called Porcellino in

[1] The tale is from *Disciplina Clericalis*.

the days of Bishop Mangiadore[1] was accused before the bishop of conducting his parish badly because of his light behaviour with women.

The bishop, holding an inquiry on him, found him most guilty.

And as he was dwelling at the bishop's palace, waiting to be deposed, his family, to help him, showed him how he might escape punishment.

They hid him at night under the Bishop's bed.

And that night the Bishop sent for one of his paramours. And being with her in bed, he sought to take hold of her, but the woman refused him, saying: many promises you have made me, but you never keep your word. The Bishop replied: light of my eyes, I promise and swear it. No, she said, I want the money paid down.

The Bishop rose to fetch the money in order to give it to his mistress, when the priest came from under the bed and said: Messer, for this

[1] Mangiadore was Bishop of Florence from 1251-74. Therefore the ordinary editions are wrong when they write: *mangiadore* meaning gluttonous. The tale is to be found in Wright's *Anecdota literaria*, London 1884, under the title "the Bishop and the Priest".

do they punish me? Now who could do otherwise?

The Bishop was ashamed and forgave him. But sorely did he take him to task before the other clergy.

LV

Here is told a tale of a man of the court whose name was Marco

Marco Lombardo[1] who was wiser than any other man of his calling, was one day approached by a poor but distinguished gentleman who secretly accepted gifts of money from people of substance, but did not take other gifts. He had a very sharp tongue, and his name was Paolino. He put such a question to Marco as he thought Marco would not be able to answer.

Marco, he said, you are the wisest man in all Italy, and you are poor, and disdain to petition for gifts: why did you not take forethought so as to be rich and not have to beg?

[1] See Novella XLIV.

And Marco turned round and then said: no one sees us, and no one hears us. And how did you manage? And Sharp-Tongue replied: I have indeed but managed to be poor. And Marco said: then do not betray me, and I will not betray you[1].

LVI

How a man of the Marches went to study in Bologna

A man from the Marches[2] went to study in Bologna. His means ran short. He wept. Another saw him, and learnt why he was weeping. He said to him: I will furnish you with means to study, and do you promise me that you will give me a thousand lire when you win your first law-suit.

[1] No doubt this is thirteenth century wit, though to us neither of the two minstrels seems to have had a particularly sharp tongue. In original: *tiello credenza a me et io a te.* In other words: *do not say we are poor. Neither shall you say it to me, nor I to you.*

[2] *Le Marche*, the province of which Ancona is now the chief town.

The scholar studied and returned to his home.

The other went after him for the recompense.

The scholar, for fear of having to pay the sum, remained idle and did not pursue his profession, and so both were losers, the one in his learning, the other in his money.

Now what did that other man devise to get his money? He sued him, and brought an action for two thousand lire against him, and said to him: either you win or you lose. If you win, you shall pay me the sum agreed upon. If you lose, you shall pay me what I sue you for.

Then the scholar paid, and refused to litigate with him.

LVII

The Woman and the Pear-tree

There was once a rich man who had a very beautiful woman to wife, and this man loved her much and was very jealous of her.

Now it happened, in God's pleasure, that this man had an illness of the eyes whence he became blind and saw the light no more.

Now it befell that this man did not leave his wife, nor ever let her out of his reach, for he feared she might go astray.

Thus it chanced that a man of the countryside fell in love with this woman, and not seeing how he could find an opportunity to converse with her —for her husband was always at her side—he came near to losing his reason for love of her.

And the woman seeing him so enamoured of her, said to him : you see, I can do nothing, for this man never leaves me.

So the good man did not know what to do or say. It seemed he would die for love. He could find no way of meeting the woman alone.

The woman, seeing the behaviour of this gentle man and all that he did, thought of a way of helping him. She made a long tube of cane, and placed it to the ear of the man, and spoke to him in this fashion so that her husband could not hear. And she said to the good man : I am sorry for you, and I have thought of a way of helping you. Go into the garden, and climb up a pear-tree which has many fine pears, and wait for me up there, and I will come up to you.

The good man went at once into the garden, and climbed up the pear-tree, and awaited the woman.

Now came the time when the woman was in the garden, and she wished to help the good man, and her husband was still by her side, and she said: I have a fancy for those pears which are at the top of that pear-tree, for they are very fine. And the husband said: call some one to pluck them for you. And the woman said: I will pluck them myself; otherwise I should not enjoy them.

Then the woman approached the tree to climb it, and her husband came with her to the foot of the tree, and he put his arms around the trunk of the tree, so that no one could follow her up it.

Now it happened that the woman climbed up the pear-tree to her friend, who was awaiting her, and they were very happy together, and the pear-tree shook with their weight, and the pears fell down on top of the husband.

Then the husband said: what are you doing, woman, you are knocking all the pears down? And the woman replied: I wanted the pears off a certain branch, and only so could I get them.

Now you must know that the Lord God and Saint Peter seeing this happening, Saint Peter said to the Lord God: do you not see the trick that woman is playing on her husband? Order that the husband see again, so he may perceive what his wife does.

And the Lord God said: I tell you, Saint Peter, that no sooner does he see the light than the woman will find an excuse, so I will that light come to him, and you shall see what she will say.

Then the light came to him, and he looked up and saw what the woman was doing. What are you doing with that man? You honour neither yourself nor me, nor is this loyal in a woman. And the woman replied at once: if I had not done so, you would not have seen the light.

And the husband, hearing this, was satisfied.

So you see how women and females are loyal, and how quickly they find excuses.[1]

[1] This *novella* is not in the Gualteruzzi edition, but is to be found in that by Papanti founded on the Panciatichiano MS.

LVIII

The Wisest of the Beasts

The most understanding beasts are monkeys, dogs and bears. These are the most understanding beasts that there are. God has given them more cleverness than all the others.

So we find in the book of Noah Servus Dei that when he was in the ark during the deluge, these three beasts kept closer to him than all the others.

And when they came out of the ark, they were the last to leave him, for out of their cleverness, they feared that the deluge might begin again[1].

LIX

Here it is told of a gentleman whom the Emperor had hanged

The Emperor Frederick one day had a great nobleman hanged for a certain misdeed. And that his justice might be visible to all, he had him

[1] From the *Panciatichiano* MS.

guarded by a noble knight with the severe command not to let him be removed ; but the knight paid little attention, and the hanged man was carried away.

When the knight became aware of this, he took thought with himself as to what he might do to save his head.

And during the night, deep in thought, he went to a neighbouring abbey to see if he could find some one newly buried there, that he might swing him from the gallows in the other one's place.

That same night he reached the abbey, and found a woman in tears dishevelled and ungirt and weeping loudly ; and she was grievously afflicted and bewailed her dear husband who had died that very day.

The knight asked her softly : what manner of grief is this ?

And the lady replied : I loved him so much that I never wish to be consoled but desire to end my days here in lamentation.

Then the knight said to her : lady, what sense is there in this ? Do you wish to die here of

grief ? Neither with tears nor with lamentations can you bring back to life a dead body. Therefore what folly is this in which you are indulging ? Do as I say : take me to husband, for I have no wife, and save my life, for I am in danger. And I do not know where to hide, for at my lord's bidding I was guarding a knight who had been hanged by the neck, and some men of his kindred carried him off. Show me how I may escape, if you can, and I will be your husband and maintain you honourably.

Then the woman, hearing this, fell in love with the knight, and said : I will do even as you bid me ; so great is the love I bear you. Let us take this husband of mine, and draw him out of his sepulchre, and hang him in the place of the man who was taken from you.

And she ceased her plaint, and helped him to draw her husband from his grave, and assisted him to hang him by the neck, dead as he was.

The knight said : lady, he had one tooth missing from his mouth, and I fear that if they came and saw him again, I might be dishonoured. And she, hearing this, broke off a tooth from his

mouth, and if more had been required, she would have done it.

Then the knight, seeing what she had done with her husband, said: lady, since you showed so little regard for one towards whom you professed such love, so would you have even less regard for me.

Then he left her, and went about his business, and she remained behind in great shame.[1]

LX

Here it is told how Charles of Anjou loved a lady

Charles, the noble king of Sicily and Jerusalem, when he was Count of Anjou, loved deeply the fair Countess of Teti, who in her turn loved the Count of Nevers.[2]

At that time the King of France[2] had forbidden all tourneying under pain of death.

[1] This story is well-known in many countries. The best known version of it is perhaps *The Ephesian Widow* in Petronius's *Satyricon*.

[2] The king is Louis IX, the saint who forbade tourneys under pain of death. The Count of Anvers or *Universa*, or *Anversa* or *Unvers*.

The Count of Anjou, wishing to put it to the proof whether he or the Count of Nevers were more valiant in arms, took thought, and went most beseechfully to Messer Alardo de'Valleri and told him of his love, saying that he had set his heart on measuring himself with the Count of Nevers, and he begged him by the love he bore him to obtain leave of the King that one sole tourney might be held with his licence. The other sought a pretext.

The Count of Anjou showed him the way. The King is almost a bigot, he said, and because of the great goodness of your nature, he hopes to induce you to put on the habit of a religious, that he may have your company. Therefore in putting this question, let it be asked as a boon, that he allow you to hold a tournament. And you will do whatever he wishes.

And Messer Alardo replied: now tell me, Count, shall I give up all my knightly company for a tourney?

And the Count replied: I promise you loyally that I will release you from your pledge. And so he did, as I shall tell you later.

Messer Alardo went off to the King of France and said: Sire, when I took arms on the day of your coronation, then all the best knights of the world did bear arms; wherefore, since for love of you, I wish by all means to leave the world, and to don the religious habit, so let it please you to grant me a boon, that a tournament may be held in which all noble knights bear arms, so that I may forsake my arms in as great a feast as that in which I took them up.

Thereupon, the King gave the leave.

A tournament was ordered.

On one side, was the Count of Nevers, and on the other side was the Count of Anjou. The Queen with countesses, ladies and damsels of high lineage were in the tribunes, and the Countess of Teti was with them.

On that day the flower of knighthood was in arms from one end of the world to the other. After much tourneying, the Count of Anjou and he of Nevers had the field cleared[1], and moved against one another with all the force of their weighty chargers and with great lances in their hands.

[1] The tournament became a jousting bout.

Now it chanced that in the midst of the field the steed of the Count of Nevers fell with the Count all in a heap, and the ladies descended from the tribunes, and bore him in their arms most tenderly.

And the Countess of Teti was with them.

The Count of Anjou lamented loudly, saying, alas! why did not my horse fall like that of the Count of Nevers, so that the Countess might have been as close to me as she was to him?

When the tourney was ended, the Count of Anjou went to the Queen, and begged of her a grace: that for love of the noble knights of France she would make a show of being angry with the King, and when they made peace, she would ask him for a boon, and the boon should be this: that it should be the King's pleasure that the youthful knights of France should not lose so noble a companion as Messer Alardo de' Valleri.

The Queen did as he said.

She feigned anger with the king, and when they made peace, she asked him for her wish.

And the King promised her a boon.

And Messer Alardo was set free of his promise, and remained with the other noble knights tourneying and performing feats of arms, so that his fame spread throughout the world for his great skill and his most wonderful prowess.

LXI

Here it is told of the philosopher Socrates, and how he answered the Greeks

Socrates was a noble Roman philosopher[1], and in his days the Greeks sent a great and noble embassy to the Romans.

The purpose of their embassy was to adduce arguments to free themselves of the tribute they paid to the Romans. And the Sultan gave them these instructions : go and make use of arguments, And if necessary, use money.

The ambassadors reached Rome.

The purpose of their embassy was set forth in the Roman Council.

[1] Various commentators have observed that this tale is only a garbled version of the story told of Curio by Cicero in his *De Senectute*, 55. See also *Gesta Romanorum*, ch. LXI.

The Roman Council decided that the reply to the Greeks' question should be made by the philosopher Socrates; it being decided without any further conditions that Rome would stand by whatever Socrates answered.

The ambassadors went to Socrates' dwelling, very far from Rome, to set their arguments before him.

They arrived at his house, which was quite unpretending. They found him picking parsley. They caught sight of him from a distance. He was a man of simple appearance. They conversed with one another, and considered the above-mentioned facts. And they said to one another: this man will be an easy bargain for us, for he seemed to them to be poor rather than rich.

They arrived and said: may God save you, O man of great wisdom, for so you must be since the Romans have entrusted so weighty a matter as this to you.

They showed him the decision of Rome, and said to him: we shall set our reasonable arguments, which are many, before you. Your own sense will

ensure our rights. And know that we obey a rich master: you will take these *perperi*[1] which are many, and yet for our lord are nothing, though to you they may be very useful.

And Socrates answered the ambassadors, and said: first you will dine, and then we will attend to your business.

They accepted the invitation and dined very poorly without leaving a morsel.

After dinner, Socrates spoke to the ambassadors and said: gentlemen, what is better, one thing or two things? The ambassadors replied: two. And he said: now go to the Romans with your persons, for if the city of Rome has the persons of the Greeks, it will have their persons and their goods. And if I took the gold, the Romans would lose their trust in me.

Then the ambassadors left the philosopher, full of shame, and obeyed the Romans.

[1] The *perpero* was a Byzantine gold coin.

LXII

Here is told a tale of Messer Roberto

Mount Arimini is in Burgundy, and there is a lord called Roberto, and it is a great county.

The countess and her maids had a sottish door-keeper, who was, however, a man of robust build, and his name was Baligante. One of the maids began to lie with him ; then she spoke of him to another until the Countess heard of him.

When the Countess heard how robust a man he was, she lay with him too.

The lord found them out. He had the man killed, and made a pie of his heart, and presented it to the Countess and her maids, and they ate of it.

After the meal, the lord came to the hall, and asked how the pie had been. They all answered : good ! Then the lord said : it is no wonder, seeing that you liked Baligante alive, that you should like him dead.

And the Countess and the maids when they heard this, were ashamed, and saw clearly that they had lost their honour in this world.

They became nuns and founded a convent, which is called the Convent of the Nuns of Rimino Monte.

The house grew apace, and became passing rich.

And this tale is told, and it is true. For there they have this custom that whenever any gentleman passes with a great quantity of chattels they invite him, and show him honour.

And the Abbess and the sisters come out to meet him, and after some conversation[1] whichever he likes best, serves him and accompanies him to board and to bed.

In the morning, when he rises, he finds water and fine linen, and when he has washed, she prepares a needle for him with a silk thread, and he must pass the thread through the eye of the needle, and if at the third trial he finds he cannot succeed, then the women deprive him of all his chattels, and give him nothing back.

And if at the third trial, he threads the needle, they give him back his arms, and present him with beautiful jewels.

[1] Orig. *in sul donneare*. The meaning is uncertain. The tale is of course to be found in the *Decameron*, IV, 9.

LXIII

Of good King Meladius and the Knight Without Fear

Good King Meladius and the Knight Without Fear were mortal enemies in the field.

One day as this Knight Without Fear was wandering about disguised, after the manner of knights-errant, he met his squires who loved him dearly, but who did not recognize him.

And they said: tell us O knight-errant, by the honour of chivalry, which is the better knight, the Knight Without Fear or good King Meladius?

And the knight answered: may God prosper me! King Meladius is the best knight who ever mounted a saddle.

Then the squires, who could not abide King Meladius, for love of their master, took their lord by surprise, and lifted him thus armed from his saddle, and set him on a jade, and said aloud that they were going to hang him.

As they went on their way, they fell in with King Meladius. They found him disguised as

a knight-errant on his way to a tournament, and he asked the fellows why they were treating that knight so villainously.

And they replied: Messer, because he has well deserved to die, and if you but knew the reason, you would treat him worse yourself than we do. Ask him of his misdeed.

King Meladius drew nearer and said: knight, what wrong have you done to these fellows that they treat you so knavishly? And the knight replied: naught. No wrong have I done to them unless it be that I favoured the cause of truth.

Said King Meladius: that cannot be. Tell me more narrowly in what way you offended. And he replied: gladly, sir. I was bent on my way, after the fashion of a knight-errant. I came across these squires, and they asked me, by the truth of chivalry to say whether good King Meladius or the Knight Without Fear were the better knight. And I, to favour, as I said before, the cause of truth, said that King Meladius was the better, and I spoke but to tell the truth, considering that King Meladius is my mortal

enemy, and I hate him mortally. I do not wish to lie. No other wrong have I done. And therefore they at once treated me so shamefully.

Then King Meladius bagan to beat thc servants, and had the knight unbound, and gave him a rich charger with his own arms (worked on the trappings) though they were covered, and he begged him not to raise the cover before reaching his castle : and they departed, and each went his way, King Meladius and the squires and the knight[1].

In the evening, the knight reached the castle. He took the cover off the saddle. He found the arms of King Meladius who had set him free so handsomely, and given him a rich gift, and yet was his mortal enemy[2].

[1] I have changed the punctuation here considerably—to the benefit, I hope, of the sense.

[2] This story, according to Manni, is taken from one of the Round Table romances. Meliadus (or Meliodas or Meliardus), King of Lyonesse, was the son of King Felix, and husband of Eliabella, daughter of old King Audrey of Sobis, and sister to King Mark of Cornwall.

LXIV

A tale told of the Court of Puy in Provence

At the court of Puy-Notre-Dame in Provence, when the son of Count Raymond[1] was made knight, a great court was held, to which were invited all good people, and so many came willingly that the robes and silver ran short. And it was necessary to have recourse to the knights of the feud itself that sufficient might be supplied for the knights who came to the court. Some refused, and some gave with good grace.

The day the feast was ordered a tame hawk was placed on a pole.

Now it was arranged that whosoever felt himself a man of courage and means enough and should take the hawk in his hand, should provide a feast for the court that year.

The knights and squires all joyous and gay, made beautiful songs and poems, and four judges were chosen that those which had merit might be rewarded.

[1] Raimondo Berlinghieri, father-in-law of St Louis, King of France, referred to in Novella XII.

Then they sang and said much good of their lord.

And their sons were noble knights and gentle.

Then it happened that one of those knights (whose name was Messer Alamanno), a man of much valour and goodness, loved a very beautiful woman of Provence who was called Madonna Grigia; and he loved her so secretly that none could guess the truth.

It came about that the squires of Puy plotted together to deceive him and make him boast of his love. They spoke thus to certain knights and barons: we pray you that at the first tournament which is held, it be ordered that there be boastings[1]. For they thought: Messer So and So is a great knight, and will do well on the day of the tourney, and will be exalted with delight. The knights will take up the boasts; and he will not be able to hold himself from boasting of his lady.

Thus it was ordered.

The tournament took place. The knight won honour and was victorious. He was excited with joy.

[1] The boasts formed a usual part of tournaments.

In the repose of the evening, the knights began the boasts: such a one of a beautiful castle; another of a fine goshawk; another of a lucky chance.

And the knight could not hold himself from boasting that he had such a beautiful lady.

Then it happened that he returned to pay her homage as was the custom. And the lady dismissed him[1].

The knight was all dismayed, and departed from her and the company of the knights and went into a forest, and shut himself up in a hermitage, so secret that none knew of it.

Then anyone who had seen the grief of the knights and the ladies and the damsels who constantly lamented the loss of so noble a knight might well have felt pity.

One day it came about that the young squires of Puy lost their prey and their bearings during a hunt, and chanced upon the aforesaid hermitage. The knight asked them if they were from Puy. They replied yes. He asked them for news.

[1] Sent him away in disgrace.

And the squires began to tell him how they had sad tidings; how for a small misdeed they had lost the flower of knights, and how this lady had dismissed him, and no one knew what had become of him. But soon, they said, a tournament will be proclaimed at which there will be many good people, and we think that he has so gentle a heart, that wherever he may be, he will come and joust with us[1]. And we have marshalled guards of great strength and knowledge who will surely bring him back. So we hope to regain our great loss.

Then the hermit wrote to a faithful friend of his to send him secretly on the day of the tournament arms and a horse. And he sent away the squires.

The friend supplied the needs of the hermit, and on the day of the tournament sent him arms and a horse, and it was the day of the challenges between the knights, and he won the prize at the tournament.

[1] The narrative changes abruptly into the direct form here as in several other places. I have kept to the original form here as elsewhere.

The guards saw him and recognized him. They bore him among them in triumph. And the people rejoiced, and lowered his visor, and begged him for love that he would sing. And he replied: I shall never sing unless I am at peace with my lady.

Then the noble knights were persuaded to go to the lady, and begged her that she would pardon him.

The lady replied: tell him I will never pardon him unless a hundred barons and a hundred knights, a hundred ladies and a hundred damsels shall cry to me with one voice for mercy, and know not to whom they cry.

Then the knight, who was a man of great wisdom, bethought himself that the feast of Candlemass was approaching, when there would be great rejoicing in Puy, and all good folk would go to the monastery. And he argued; my lady will be there and many good people, such as she (Madonna Grigia) has asked herself shall cry out to her for mercy.

Then he composed a very beautiful song; and in the morning early went up into the pulpit

and began to sing his song as best he knew, and well he knew how to sing it, and thus it ran :

Like the stag which has run a great course and comes to die 'mid the sound of the hunters' cries, so, lady, to your pity, I turn . . .[1]

Then all the folk who were in the church cried out mercy, and the lady pardoned him.

And he entered into her good grace as he had been before.

LXV

Here it is told of Queen Iseult and Messer Tristan of Lyonesse

Messer Tristan of Cornwall loved Iseult the fair[2], who was King Mark's wife, and between them they fashioned a love signal in this wise : that when Messer Tristan wished to speak to her,

[1] The original of the " song " runs :—

Aissi co'l sers que cant a fait lonc cors
Torna murir als crit del chassadors,
Aissi torn eu, dompna, en vostra mersé.

A longer "song" is given in some of the readings.

[2] Iseult *la bionda*, to distinguish her from Iseult *dalla bianca mano* " of the white hand ".

he went to a garden of the king where there stood a fountain, and he muddied the water of the rivulet made by the fountain: which rivulet passed by the palace where the lady Iseult lived.

So when she saw the water disturbed, she knew that Messer Tristan was at the fountain.

Now it happened that an inquisitive gardener[1] perceived the plan in such a manner that the two lovers could in no way be aware of his knowledge.

This gardener went to King Mark and told him everything as it had happened. King Mark believed him.

He ordered a hunt, and separated from his knights as though he had lost his way. The knights searched for him, wandering about the forest. King Mark climbed up the pine tree which stood above the fountain where Tristan spoke with the queen.

And King Mark staying in the pine-tree at night, Messer Tristan came to the fountain and disturbed its water.

A little while after, the queen came to the fountain. And by chance she had a happy

[1] Biagi has "an ill-disposed knight".

thought to look at the pine-tree. And she saw that its shadow was deeper than usual. Then the queen became afraid, and being afraid, she stopped and spoke with Tristan in this manner and said: disloyal knight, I have made you come here to complain of your misdeed, for never was such disloyalty in a knight as you have shown by your words which have dishonoured me, and your uncle king Mark who has loved you so much. And you have been saying things about me among the wandering knights that could never have place in my heart. I would give myself to the flames should I dishonour so noble a king as my lord the king Mark. Therefore I no longer recognise you as my knight, and I dismiss you as an unloyal knight with all my force and with no respect.

Tristan, hearing these words, doubted strongly, and said: my lady, if some malicious knights of Cornwall speak of me in this fashion, I say first of all that I was never guilty of such things. May it please your ladyship, but by the Lord, these knights are envious of me. I have never said or done anything that meant dishonour for you or

for my uncle, the king Mark. But since it is your pleasure, I will obey your commands. I will go away to other parts to end my days. And maybe before I die, the malicious knights of Cornwall will have felt need of me as they did at the time of Amoroldo[1], when I delivered them and their lands from a vile and painful servitude.

And he went away without saying another word.

King Mark who was above the two when he heard this, grew glad with a great gladness.

When morning came, Tristan made feint to go riding. He had horses and pack mules shod. Valets ran to and fro, some carrying saddles, others bridles. The commotion was great.

The king grew angry at Tristan's departure, and summoned his barons and knights. He sent an order to Tristan not to depart without his leave under pain of incurring his displeasure. Thus ordered the king, and so vigorously, that

[1] Amoraldo, King of Ireland, who, in order to extort a tribute from King Mark, laid siege to one of his towns, and was killed by Tristan.

the queen sent to Tristan and bade him not to go.

And so Tristan remained there, and did not depart.

Nor was he surprised or deceived again owing to the shrewd circumspection that grew up between the two.

LXVI

Here it is told of a philosopher who was called Diogenes

There was a very wise philosopher whose name was Diogenes. This philosopher had been taking a bath in a pool and was standing by a cave in the sun. Alexander of Macedon passed with a great force of cavalry. He saw the philosopher, spoke to him and said: O man of miserable existence, ask me something, and whatever you wish I will give it you.

And the philosopher replied: I beg you to remove yourself from my light.

LXVII

Here it is told of Papirius and how his father brought him to the council

Papirius was a Roman, a powerful man, wise and very fond of war. And the Romans wishing to defend themselves against Alexander, put their trust in the valour of this Papirius.

When Papirius was a child, his father took him with him to the council. One day the council ordered that its sittings should be kept secret. And his mother, who wanted to know what the Romans had been discussing, plied him with many questions.

Papirius perceiving the desire of his mother, concocted a splendid lie, and said thus: the Romans were discussing which was better: for the men to have two wives, or the women two husbands, so that the race may multiply to meet those who are rebellious against Rome. The council decided that it was better and more convenient that the men should have two wives.

The mother, who had promised the boy to keep the matter a secret, told the thing to another woman, who told it to yet another.

Thus it went from one to another until all Rome knew of it. The women came together and went to the senators, and made great complaint. And they feared still graver novelties. Hearing the complaints, they courteously dismissed the women, and commended Papirius for his wisdom.

And then the commune of Rome decided that no father should take his son with him to council[1].

LXVIII

Of a question which a young man proposed to Aristotle

Aristotle was a great philosopher.

There came to him one day a young man with a singular question. Master, he said, I have seen a thing which much displeases my mind. I have seen an old man ripe in years doing wanton follies. Now if the cause of such things be age,

[1] See Aulus Gelius, Macrobius, and Polibius.

I have decided to die young. Therefore for the love of God give me counsel, if you can.

Aristotle replied: I cannot do other than tell you that when the nature of man grows old, the good natural heat changes into weakness, while the reasonable virtue fails and alters[1]. For your instruction I will teach you what I can. Do so that in your youth you practice all beautiful, pleasant and honest things, and guard yourself from indulging in what is contrary to these; so when you are old, you will live without evil, not from nature or from reason, but owing to the long pleasant and noble habit you have formed.

LXIX

Here it is told of the great justice of the Emperor Trajan

The Emperor Trajan was a most just lord.

Going one day with his host of cavalry against his enemies, a widow woman came before him, and taking hold of his stirrup said: Sire, render me justice against those who have wrongfully put

[1] This passage is obscure and defective.

my son to death. And the Emperor answered: I will give you satisfaction when I return. And the woman said[1]: and if you do not return? To which he replied: my successor will give you satisfaction. And if your successor should fail me, you will be my debtor. And supposing that he give me satisfaction, the fact of another man rendering me justice will not absolve you of blame. Moreover, your successor may have enough to do to think of himself.

Then the Emperor got down from his horse, and did justice on those who had killed the woman's son, and then rode off and defeated his enemies.

And not a long time after his death[2] there came holy Saint Gregory the pope, and learning of his work of justice, went to his monument. And with tears in his eyes, he honoured the Emperor with mighty praise and had him disinterred. It was found that all the body had turned to dust save the bones and the tongue.

[1] "she said".

[2] The compilator is considerably out of his reckoning here, as, of course, Pope Gregory lived more than four centuries after Trojan. He was elected Pope in 570.

And this showed how just a man he had been, and how justly he had spoken.

And Saint Gregory prayed to God for him. And it is related that by evident miracle, owing to the prayers of this holy pope, the soul of the Emperor was freed from the torments of hell and passed into eternal life, pagan though he had been[1].

LXX

Here it is told how Hercules went into the forest

Hercules was a very strong man beyond other men's strength, and he had a wife who caused him much trouble.

One day he went off suddenly and entered a great forest where he found bears and lions and very fierce wild beasts. He tore them apart, and killed them all with his mighty strength. No beast did he find strong enough to be able to protect itself from him.

And he remained a long time in this forest.

[1] The story probably originated from an episode mentioned by Dion Cassius.

He returned to his wife and house with his garments all torn and wearing lion skins on his back. His wife came forward to meet him, making great festivity, and began to say : welcome, my lord, what news have you ?

And Hercules replied : I come from the forest. I have found all the wild beasts more gentle than you, for I have subdued all those I have come across save you. Indeed it is you who have subdued me. You are therefore the strongest thing[1] I have ever encountered, for you have conquered him who has conquered all the others.

LXXI

Here it is told how Seneca consoled a woman whose son had died.

Seneca wishing to console a woman whose son had died, as we read in the Book of Consolation[2], he said these words : if you were a woman

[1] The text is subject to various readings. Biagi has "thing" (*cosa*) while other versions give "woman" and "wild beast," *femina* and *fiera*.

[2] A book of Seneca's.

like other women, I should not speak to you as I am going to speak. But for the fact that you, though woman, have the intellect of a man, I will speak to you so. There were two women in Rome, and the son of each of them died. One was one of the dearest lads in the world, and the other was most lovable, too. One woman let herself receive consolation, and was content to be consoled ; the other woman hid herself in a corner of the house and refused every consolation, and gave herself to tears. Which of these two acted the more wisely ? If you say she who was willing to be consoled, you say rightly. Therefore, why weep ? If you tell me : I weep for my son, because his goodness did me honour, I tell you you are not mourning him, but rather your own loss, whence it is for yourself you are weeping, and it is a very ugly thing to weep over oneself. And if you will say to me : my heart is weeping because I loved him so much, it is not true, for you love him less now that he is dead, than when he was alive. And if your grief be for love, why did you not weep when he was alive, knowing that he had to die ? Hence, do not excuse yourself :

cease your tears. If your son is dead, it cannot be otherwise. Death is second nature, and therefore a thing meet and necessary for all.

And so he consoled her.

We read further of Seneca that being Nero's master, he beat him when he was young and his scholar, and when Nero was made emperor, he remembered the beatings received from Seneca, and he had him taken and condemned to death.

But he did him the favour of letting him choose what kind of death he would have.

And Seneca chose to have his veins opened in a hot bath.

And his wife wept and cried out: alas! my lord, what grief that you should die for no fault of yours.

And Seneca replied: it is better that I should die without fault than through some fault of mine. For then he who kills me wrongfully would be excused.

LXXII

Here it is told how Cato lamented against fortune

Cato the philosopher, one of Rome's greatest men, being in prison and in poverty, rallied against his fate, and was sorely grieved and said: why have you taken so much away from me? Then he answered himself in the place of fate and said: my son, how finely have I not brought you up and educated you. I have given you all you have asked me. I have given you the lordship of Rome. I have made you master of many delights, of great palaces, of much gold, fine horses and beautiful accoutrements. O my son, why do you complain? Is it because I leave you?

And Cato answered: yes, I grieve for this. And fate replied: my son, you are a wise man. Do you not remember that I have other little sons, whom I must take care of? Do you want me to abandon them? That would not be right. Ah! what a host of children I have to support! My son, I cannot stay longer with you. Do not complain, for I have taken away from you nothing, since what you have lost was not yours. For

what can be lost is not one's own. And what is not personal to you is not yours.

LXXIII

How the Sultan being in need of money, sought to find occasion to proceed against a Jew

The Sultan, being in need of money, was advised to proceed against a rich Jew, who lived in his country, and to try to take away his substance from him.

The Sultan sent for this Jew and asked him what was the best religion, thinking he will say surely the Jewish faith, when I will tell him that he sins against mine. And if he says the Saracen, I will ask him why he is a Jew.

The Jew, hearing the question, replied : Sire, there was a father who had three sons, and he had a ring with a precious stone, one of the finest in the world. Each of the sons begged this father that he should leave him this ring at his death. The father, seeing that each of them desired it, sent for a good jeweller and said to him : master, make me two rings just like this one, and set in

each of them a stone resembling this one. The jeweller made the rings so that no one knew the real gem apart save the father. He sent for his sons one by one, and to each he gave a ring in secret, and each believed he had the true ring, and no one knew the truth save the father. And so I tell you of the faiths which are three. God above knows best of all, and his sons who are ourselves each of us thinks he has the true one.

Then the Sultan hearing the man get out of the difficulty in this manner, did not know how to entrap him, and let him go[1].

LXXIV

The story of a vassal and a lord

A vassal of a lord who held his lands, it being at the season of the new figs, and the lord walking through his land, saw a fine ripe fig at the top of a fig-tree. The lord told the vassal to pluck it for him.

[1] The story derives from Jewish sources, and appeared for what was probably the first time in the *Scebet Jehuda*. It is to be found in several other places in slightly different forms. See *Gesta Romanorum*, *Avventuroso Ciciliano* of Busone da Gubbio, etc.

The vassal then thought : since he likes them, I will keep them for him. So he tended the tree and watched it carefully.

When the figs were ripe, he brought the lord a basketful, thinking so to win his favour. But when he brought them, the season was past, and there was such an abundance of figs that they were almost given to the swine.

The lord, seeing the figs, grew indignant, and ordered his servants to bind the vassal and take the figs from him and to throw them one by one in his face. And when a fig came near his eye, he cried out: my lord, I thank you.

The servants owing to the strangeness of this, went and told their lord who said : why did he say so ? And the man answered : Sire, because I had in mind to bring peaches, and if I had brought them, I should now be blind.

Then the lord began to laugh, and had the man unbound and gave him wherewith to dress himself again, and made him a present for the novel thing he had said[1].

[1] Suetonius (*Vita Tiber.*) has a somewhat similar story of the Emperor Tiberius.

LXXV

How the Lord entered into partnership with a minstrel

The Lord once formed a partnership with a minstrel.

Now it befell one day that it had been made known that wedding festivities were to be held, and it had also been made known that a rich man had died. The minstrel said: I will go to the wedding, and you shall go the funeral. The Lord went to the funeral, and succeeded in raising the dead man. He received a reward of one hundred ducats.

The minstrel went to the wedding, and ate his fill. And he returned home, and found his companion, who had earned his reward. He praised him. The Lord had eaten nothing. The minstrel obtained some money from him, and bought a fat kid, and roasted it. And as he roasted it, he drew out the kidneys, and ate them.

When it was set before his companion, the latter asked for the kidneys. The minstrel replied: the kids in this region have no kidneys.

Now it befell, on another occasion, that another wedding was announced, and another rich man died. And God said: this time I wish to go the wedding, and do you go to the funeral; and I will show you how to raise the dead man. You shall make the sign of the cross on him, and you shall bid him to rise, and he will arise. But first of all, let them promise you a reward. The minstrel said: indeed, so I will.

He went, and promised to raise him; but he did not rise, for all his signing.

The dead man was the son of a great lord.

The father waxed wroth, seeing that this man was making a mock of him. He sent him away to be hanged by the neck.

The Lord went out to meet him, and said: Do not fear, for I will raise him; but tell me, on your honour, who did eat the kidneys of the kid? The minstrel replied: By that holy world whither I must go, oh my partner, I did not eat them. The Lord, seeing that he could not make him confess, had pity on him. So he went, and raised the dead man. And the other was set free, and received the recompense that he had been

promised. They returned home. The Lord said: O my partner, I wish to leave you, because I have not found you to be as loyal as I thought you were.

And he, seeing that it must be so perforce, said: I am content. Do you divide, and I will take my share. The Lord divided the money into three parts. And the minstrel said: What are you doing? We are but two. Said the Lord: That is indeed so; but this one part shall belong to him who ate the kidneys, and the others shall be, one yours and one mine.

Then the minstrel said: By my faith, since you speak this, I must indeed tell you that I did eat them. I am so old, that I may tell no more lies. And so such things can be proved for money, which a man will confess who would not confess them in order to save his own life[1].

[1] This tale was widely known throughout Europe and a part of Asia during the Middle Ages, and is still frequently found on the lips of popular tellers of tales. The oldest version of it is to be found in the Persian poet Ferid-ed-din-'Attar: see translation by Ruckert in *Zeitschrift deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, XIV, 280.

LXXVI

Here it is told of the great killing done by King Richard

Good King Richard of England once crossed the seas with his barons, counts and brave and valiant knights, but he brought no horses, and so he arrived in the land of the Sultan.

And it came about that he gave the order for battle, and made such a great killing of the Saracens that the nurses say there to the children when they cry: Here comes King Richard, for like death was he feared.

They tell that the Sultan seeing his men fly, asked: how many are these Christians who do such great slaughter, and they answered him: Sire, there is only King Richard with his folk. Then the Sultan said: May God forbid that so noble a man as King Richard should go on foot. He ordered a fine steed to be sent to him.

The messenger brought the fine steed and said: Sire, the Sultan sends you this horse so that you need not remain on foot.

But the King was wise, and ordered a squire of his to mount the horse that he might try it.

And this the squire did. The horse was trained to come back to the Sultan's camp. The horseman could not hold it in, for it raced with all its might to the Sultan's pavilion. The Sultan had been expecting to see King Richard, but he did not come.

Thus we see that we should have little trust in the kind offers of our enemies.

LXXVII

Here is told of Messer Rinieri, a knight of the Court

Messer Rinieri of Monte Nero[1], a knight of the court, went to Sardinia, and dwelt with the lord of Alborea, and fell in love with a Sardinian lady who was very beautiful. He lay with her. The husband found them out. He did them no harm, but went to his lord, and made great complaint.

The Lord loved this Sardinian. He sent for Messer Rinieri ; he spoke to him words of severe

[1] Monte Nero is a little hill-town near Leghorn, with a famous sanctuary of the Madonna. Rinieri, or rather Ranieri, is the name of the patron-saint of Pisa.

menace. And Messer Rinieri begged his pardon, and told him to send for the woman, and to ask her, whether what she had done was for aught but for love. The lord did not like to be made fun of. He ordered him to leave the country under penalty of his life. And not having yet been rewarded for his services, Messer Rinieri said: May it please you to send to Pisa to your seneschal to provide for me. That will I do right gladly. He wrote him a letter and gave it to him.

Now when he had reached Pisa, and went to the aforesaid seneschal, and sat at table with many noble persons, he narrated what had happened, and then gave this letter to the seneschal. This man read it, and found that he was to give him a pair of linen hose without feet, and nothing else. And he wished to receive them before all the knights present.

When he had them, there was great merriment and much laughter. He was not at all angered by this, for he was an exceedingly gentle knight.

Now it befell that he entered into a boat with a horse and a servant of his, and returned to Sardinia.

One day when his lord was riding out with other knights, he met Messer Rinieri who was tall and had long legs, and was sitting on a worn jade, and had these linen hose on his legs. The lord recognised him, and with angry mien sent for him, to come before him, and said: What does this mean, Messer Rinieri, why have you not left Sardinia? Certes, said Messer Rinieri. I did but return for the feet of the hose. He stretched out his legs, and showed his feet.

Then the lord was amused, and laughed, and forgave him, and presented him with the robe that he wore, and said: Messer Rinieri, you have been wiser than I, and know more than I taught you. And he rejoined: Messer, that redounds to your honour.

LXXVIII

Here is told of a philosopher much given to the vulgarisation of science

There was once a philosopher, who was much given to vulgarising science, to please some lords and other persons.

One night he saw in a vision the Goddesses of science, in the form of beautiful women, in a bawdy-house. And seeing this, he wondered much, and said : What is this ? Are you not the Goddesses of Science ? And they replied : Of a surety we are. How is this that you are in a bawdy-house ? And they rejoined : Indeed it is true, for you are he who makes us to be here.

He awoke, and considered that to vulgarise science is to lower the divinity. He ceased to do so, and repented sorely.

So know that not all things are adapted to all persons.

LXXIX

Here it is told of a Court player who adored a lord

There was a lord who had a player at his court, and this player adored his lord as though he were his god.

Another player of the court, seeing this, spoke ill of him and said : who is this man whom you call your god ? He is nobody. And the first,

being bold for the favour he enjoyed of his lord, beat the other fellow unmercifully. This man, being unable to defend himself, went to complain to the lord and related the whole event.

The lord made a jest of the matter.

The beaten jongleur went away, and hid himself among people of mean rank, for he feared to remain among better folk for the shame that had come to him.

Now it happened that the lord heard of this and was displeased, so that he decided to dismiss his player and send him away.

It was the custom in this court that when a man received a present from his lord he knew himself dismissed from service. The lord took a great deal of money and placed it in a tart, and when his jongleur came before him, he gave it him, saying to himself: since I am constrained to discharge him, I want him to be a wealthy man.

When the jongleur saw the tart, he became distressed. He thought and said to himself: I have eaten; I will keep it and give it to my landlady.

Taking it with him to the inn, he found there the man whom he had beaten, and he was wretched and sad. The player feeling pity for him, went towards him, and gave him the tart. And he took it, and went off with it, and was well repaid for the punishment he had taken from the other.

Then the jongleur going back to his lord to take farewell of him, the lord said : what, you are still here ? Did you not have the tart ? Sir, I had it. What did you do with it ? Sir, I had eaten then. I gave it to a poor court player, who spoke ill of me because I called you my god.

Then the lord said : go and bad fortune go with you, for certainly his god is a better one than yours.

And he told him all about the tart.

The jongleur felt himself lost, and did not know what to do. He separated from his lord and had nothing further from him.

And he went out to seek for the man to whom he had given the tart.

Nor was it true that he ever found him.

LXXX

The Pilgrim and the Ugly Woman.

A pilgrim who had committed a crime was arrested; and it was made known that he should pay a thousand franks or else lose the use of his eyes.

Since the pilgrim was unable to pay, he was bound and blindfolded, as is the custom of that place.

When he was led through the town to the place of punishment, a woman, who had great possessions, although she was extremely ugly, saw this pilgrim, who was young and handsome, and asked why he was led to the place of punishment. She was told that it was because he could not pay a thousand franks.

The woman sent word to him that if he would take her to wife, she would pay the thousand franks. The pilgrim consented; he was brought before the woman.

When the pilgrim saw that the woman was so ugly, he said to those who had taken off his bandage

that he might see the woman: quickly, quickly, blindfold me again, for it is better never to see, than always to see something unpleasant.

The lord of that country learned what the pilgrim had said: therefore he sent for him, and condoned his punishment, and set him free[1].

LXXXI

Here below it is told of the council which was held by the sons of King Priam of Troy

When the sons of king Priam had re-made Troy, which the Greeks had destroyed, and Talamon and Agamemnon had taken the lady Hesione, the sons of Priam called a meeting of their powerful allies and spoke so among their friends: dear friends, the Greeks have done us a great wrong. They have killed our folk, and destroyed our city, and our lady they have taken away. And we have re-made our city and strengthened it. Our alliance is a powerful one. Moreover, we have

[1] I have taken this tale from the Magliabechiana MS, as given in Papanti, No. 31.

gathered together no little treasure. Now let us send and tell them they must make amend for the injuries done us, that they must give us back our lady. And this Paris said.

Then the good Hector who surpassed in valour at that time all the valorous men, spoke thus: my lords, war is not to my liking, nor do I advise it, for the Greeks are more powerful than we are. They have valour and wealth and science, and so we are not in a position to combat them, for this great strength of theirs. And I say this not from cowardice. For if it shall be that the war cannot be avoided, I will uphold my part in it like anyone else. And I will support the weight of the battle. And this is against those who would make the enterprise.

Now the war came about. Hector was in the battle together with the Trojans, and was as valiant as a lion. And with his own hands he killed more than two thousand of the Greeks.

Hector killed the Greeks and supported the Trojans and escaped death.

But in the end Hector was slain, and the Trojans abandoned every defence. The bold

spirits who had urged the war grew fainter in their hardihood, and Troy was again conquered by the Greeks and subjugated by them.[1]

LXXXII

Here it is told how the Lady of Shalott died for love of Lancelot of the Lake

The daughter of a great vassal[2] loved Lancelot of the Lake beyond measure, but he did not wish to give her his love, since he had given it to Queen Guinevere. So much did the girl love Lancelot that she came to death thereby, and she commanded that when her soul had left her body, a rich boat should be prepared to be covered with a vermilion cloth, and a fine bed laid therein with rich and noble coverings of silk and adorned with precious stones.

[1] The account is of course full of anachronisms and absurdities, such as the two thousand Greeks killed by Hector. It is based on the legend of Darete Frigio, it would seem, popularized in Italy by the Poet Guido delle Colonne, a Sicilian. See also the *Roman de Troie*.

[2] Vassal to a king, a lord, or noble.

And her body was to be laid in this bed dressed in her finest garments with a lovely crown on her head, rich in gold and ornamented with precious stones, and she was to have a rare girdle and a satchel too.

And in the satchel there was to be a letter of the following tenour.

But first of all let us tell of what happened before the letter. The damsel died of the sickness of love, and it was done with her as she wished[1] about the vessel with no sails or oars and no one aboard.

The sailless vessel was put into the sea with the woman, and the sea took it to Camelot, and drifted it to the shore.

A cry passed through the court. The knights and barons came down from the palaces, and noble King Arthur came too, and marvelled mightily that the boat was there with no guide.

The king stepped on to it and saw the damsel and the furnishings. He had the satchel opened and the letter was found. He ordered that it

[1] The versions differ here. Biagi gives the lines about the sailless vessel with oars and no one aboard.

should be read, and it ran : to all the knights of the Round Table this lady of Shallot sends greetings as to the gentlest folk in the world. And if you would know why I have come to this end, it is for the finest knight in the world and the most villainous, that is my lord Sir Lancelot of the Lake, whom I did not know how to beg that he should have pity on me. So I died there for loving well as you can see.

LXXXIII

How Christ going one day with his disciples in a deserted place, they saw great treasure

Christ one day going with his disciples through a deserted place, the disciples who followed Him saw some great pieces of fine gold shining there.

So they, calling Christ, and marvelling that He had not stayed to observe, said to Him : Lord, let us take this gold which will serve us for many needs.

And Christ turned to them and reproved them and said : you want those things which take from

our kingdom the greatest number of souls. And that this is true, on our return you will see the proof.

And He passed on.

A little while after, two dear companions found the gold and were greatly rejoiced thereat, and one went to the nearest village to get a mule, while the other remained on guard.

Now listen to the guilty deeds that followed the guilty thoughts sent them by the devil[1]. The one with the mule returned and said to his companion: I have eaten in the village, and you must be hungry. Eat these two fine breads and then we will load up. The other replied: I have no great will to eat now. Therefore, let us load up first.

And they began to load the mule.

And when they had almost finished loading, the one who had gone for the mule bent down to tie the bundle fast, and the other ran behind him treacherously with a pointed knife, and killed him. Then he gave one of the breads to the mule, and ate the other himself. The bread was

[1] lit. the enemy (*'l nemico*).

poisoned. The man fell down dead, and so did the mule, before they could leave the spot, and the gold remained untouched as it had been before[1].

Our Lord then passed with His disciples the same day, and showed them the example He had spoken of[2].

LXXXIV

How Messer Azzolino Romano arranged a great charity

Messer Azzolino Romano once announced a great charity in his territory, and invited the people there and elsewhere to attend.

And so all the poor men and women were summoned to his meadows on a certain day, that each should be given a new habit and plenty to eat. The news spread abroad. Folk came from all parts.

[1] lit. free, unpossessed, *libero*.

[2] See *Rappresentazione di S. Antonio*, Le Monnier (1872), II, 33.

When the day of the assembly arrived, the seneschals[1] were ready with the clothes and the food, and each person was made to undress and cast off his old shoes, when new clothes were given and food handed out.

The poor people wanted their old clothes back, but it was of no avail, for they were all piled up in a heap and fire was laid thereto.

Then so much gold and silver were given as compensated them, and they were told to go home in the name of God.

It was in his[2] time that a certain peasant charged a neighbour with having stolen his cherries. When the accused appeared, he said: send and see if that be true, for the cherry tree is covered with fruit. Then Messer Azzolino had proof that this was so, and condemned the accuser to pay a sum of money, telling the other to look after his cherries rather than rely on his lord's justice.

And the man decided to do this.

For fear of his tyranny, a woman brought him a sack of walnuts of splendid quality. And dressed

[1] Superior servants, major-domos.

[2] Azzolino's of course.

up as well as she could contrive, she reached the spot when he[1] was with his knights and said: Sire, may God give you long life.

And he was suspicious and asked: why do you say so? She replied: because if it is so, we shall have a long rest. And Azzolino laughed and ordered that she be given and put on a fine skirt which came to her knees, and he made her hold it up and had all the nuts scattered on the floor, and then he made the woman pick them up again one by one and place them in the sack, and then he rewarded her handsomely.

In Lombardy and the Marches, the pans are called pots[2]. Azzolino's retainers had, out of mischief, taken a potter one day to bring him to judgment, and Messer Azzolino was in the room. He said: who is this man? Some one answered: Sire, he is a potter. Go and hang him then.

[1] Throughout this novella Azzolino is nearly always referred to as "he".

[2] "*si chiamano le pentole, olle.*" The point of this *novella* depends on the play of the words untranslatable in English. They told Azzolino that the man was "un olaro" a potter, while the tyrant understood them to say *uno laro*, that is *un ladro*, or a thief.

But, sire, he is a potter. Therefore I say go and hang him. Sire, we are only saying that he is a potter. Well, I say again that you take him and hang him.

Then the judge perceived the origin of the misunderstanding. And he explained it, but it was of no avail for Azzolino had said it three times, and the man had to be hung.

It would take too long to tell how feared he was, and it is within the knowledge of many.

It is recorded how one day being with the Emperor on horseback with all their followers, the two of them made a challenge which had the finer sword. The Emperor drew his sword from its sheath, and it was magnificently ornamented with gold and precious stones.

Then said Messer Azzolino: it is very fine, but mine is finer by far.

And he drew it forth.

Then six hundred knights who were with him all drew forth theirs. When the Emperor saw the swords, he said that Azzolino's was the finer.

Azzolino was taken in battle at a place which

is called Casciano[1], and he banged his head so hard against the pole supporting the tent where he was imprisoned and bound, that he killed himself.

LXXXV

Of a great famine that was once in Genoa

There was once a great famine in Genoa, and there were more poor people to be found there than in any other place.

The authorities seized a number of galleys, and they impressed sailors and paid them, and published a notice that all the poor people should go down to the sea-shore, where they would have bread from the commune.

Everybody went, and it was a great marvel, and this was because many who were not in need disguised themselves as beggars.

And the officials said to the people : we cannot distinguish between all these folk, but let the citizens go on to this ship here, and the foreigners on to that one there ; the women and children

[1] Cassano on the Adda.

on to that other, and all must go aboard. The sailors set to work at once, and put their oars into the water, and bore the folk off to Sardinia.

And there they left them, for there was plenty there, and the famine ceased in Genoa.

LXXXVI

The Emperor and the Pilgrim

The Emperor[1] riding through the streets of Rome, saw a pilgrim who seemed to him to bear a close resemblance to his own person, and he asked his barons whether the said pilgrim was like him.

Everyone said he was. Then the Emperor believed it was true what he thought about the pilgrim, namely that the pilgrim's mother might have been in Rome, and that his Imperial father might have had to do with her. He asked the pilgrim: Pilgrim, was your mother ever in Rome? And the pilgrim understood why the Emperor said that, and replied: Sire, my mother was never in Rome, but my father was, often.

[1] The Emperor Frederick II.

The Emperor appreciated how well the pilgrim had answered: he let him come to his court, and showed him much honour[1].

LXXXVII

How a man went to shrive himself

A man went to a priest to confession; and among other things he said: I have a sister-in-law, and my brother is far away; and whenever I go home, her familiarity is so great that she sits down on my lap; how should I behave?

The priest answered; if she did so to me. she would be well requited for it.

LXXXVIII

Here is told of Messer Castellano da Cafferi of Mantua

When Messere Castellano of Mantua was the governor[2] of Florence, there arose a quarrel between Messer Pepo Alemanni and Messer

[1] This tale comes from the Magliabecchiana MS, as given in Papanti, No. 27.

[2] *Podestà.*

Cante Caponsacchi, so that they threatened one another direly.

Wherefore the governor, to put an end to the difference, sent them both over the frontier. Messer Pepo he sent in one direction and Messer Cante, since he was a great friend of his, he sent to Mantua. And he recommended him to his family ; and Messere Cante rewarded him in this way : he lay with his wife.

LXXXIX

Here it is told of a Court player who began a story that never ended

A company of knights were dining one night in a great house in Florence, and there was with them a court buffoon who was a famous story-teller.

When the knights had supped he began a story which never ended.

A youth of the house who was waiting and was perhaps impatient, called the story-teller by name, and said : he who taught you this story

did not teach you all of it. The other replied: why is that ?

And the young man said : because he did not teach you the end.

Then the story-teller was ashamed and stopped.

XC

Here it is told how the emperor Frederick killed a falcon of his

The emperor Frederick went hunting one day with his falcons, of which he was fonder than of a city. He cast it at a crane, and the latter flew high. The falcon too flew high, much above the other bird. He saw below him an eagle. He drove it to earth and held it and killed it.

The emperor ran up, thinking it was a crane, but soon saw what bird it was.

Then in anger he called his executioner, and ordered that the falcon's head should be cut off, because he had killed his lord and master[1].

[1] The eagle being the king of birds, the Emperor considered the falcon as a kind of regicide, and so ordered it to be killed.

XCI

How a certain man confessed to a friar

A certain man confessed to a friar, and told him that being once at the plundering of a house it was my intention[1] to find in a certain drawer a hundred gold florins. But I found the drawer empty; therefore I believe that I did not sin.

The friar replied, certainly you did sin just the same as if you had found the florins. The man showed himself much troubled and said: for the love of God give me the absolution[2]. The friar replied: I cannot absolve you unless you make restitution. And the man answered, that I will do with pleasure, but I do not know to whom to make it. The friar answered: make it to me, and I will dispose of it in the name of God. The man promised to do this, and went away, and so familiar[3] had he become with the friar that he returned on the morrow.

[1] This brusque change into the direct narration is characteristic of the *Novellino*. I have followed the original here, and elsewhere, where it has been possible as tending to presenve the quality of the quaint original.

[2] *consigliatemi*, a rather unusual form

[3] The meaning may also be: he was so content.

Talking with the friar, he said that some one had sent him a fine sturgeon, and that he would send it to him for dinner. For this the friar rendered him many thanks.

The man went away, and sent the friar nothing at all, but he returned to see him a day after with cheerful mien. The friar said: why have you kept me waiting, and not sent me the sturgeon ?[4] The other replied: did you expect to have it ? Yes, certainly, said the friar. And you haven't had it ? No. Well, then, it is just the same as if you had had it.

XCII

Here it is told of a good woman who had made a fine pie

There was a woman who had made a fine eel pie,[2] and had put it in the cupboard. She saw a mouse enter by the window, attracted by the good smell. The woman called the cat, and put

[4] " and not sent me the sturgeon " is missing in some texts. Biagi gives the version as printed here.

[2] *crostate* also means tart.

it in the cupboard to catch the mouse. The mouse hid itself among the flour, and the cat ate the pie. When the woman opened the door the mouse jumped out.

And the cat, because it was satisfied, did not catch it.

XCIII

Here it is told of a countryman who went to shrive himself

A countryman went one day to shrive himself. And he took holy water, and saw the priest working in the fields. He called him and said: Sir, I should like to be shriven.

The priest replied: did you confess last year? and he rejoined: Yes. Then put a penny in the alms-box, and for the same fine, I absolve you this year as I did last year.

XCIV

Here it is told of the fox and the mule

The fox going through a wood, happened upon a mule, and it had never seen a mule before.

The fox was greatly afraid, and fled and fleeing happened upon a wolf. The fox said she had discovered a very strange beast[1], and did not know its name. The wolf said: let us go and see it. And they came to it. To the wolf it appeared very strange. The fox asked it its name. The mule replied: to tell the truth I cannot remember very well, but if you can read, you will find it written on my back right hoof. The fox replied: never mind, I cannot read, much as I should like to. The wolf then took up: leave it to me, for I can read very well indeed. The mule then showed his right hoof, the cleaving whereof seemed like letters. The wolf said: I cannot see them very well. The mule answered: come a little closer, for the letters are very small. The wolf came nearer and looked closely. The mule then gave him a kick which killed him.

The fox went off saying: not everyone who can read is wise[2].

[1] lit. "a very new beast."

[2] The novella appears elsewhere, as in the *Proverbi* of Cinto de' Fabrizi.

XCV

Here it is told of a countryman who went to the town

A peasant from the country came to Florence to buy a doublet. He asked at a shop where the proprietor was. He was not there. But a youth in the shop said: I am the master; what is it you want? I want a doublet. The youth found him one. Try it on, he said. They argued over the price. The countryman had only a quarter of the money. The apprentice, pretending to help him with the doublet, sewed the man's shirt to it and then said: take it off. And the other removed it, remaining naked.

The other apprentices were ready with sticks and they chased and beat the man all through the city.

XCVI

Here it is told of Bito and Messer Frulli of San Giorgio near Florence

Bito was a Florentine and a fine courtier, and dwelt at San Giorgio beyond the city. There

was also an old man called Ser Frulli, who had a farm over at San Giorgio which was very pleasant, so that he lived there almost the whole year with his family, and every morning he sent his servant to sell fruit and vegetables at the market by the bridge.

And he was so miserly and suspicious that he made up the bundles of the vegetables, and counted them over to the servant, and then counted over all that she brought back.

His especial warning to her was not to loiter in San Giorgio, because there were women thieves there.

One morning the servant passed with her basketful of cabbages. Bito, who had thought the thing out beforehand, had put on his finest fur coat. And sitting by the bench outside, he called the serving-maid who went over to him unthinkingly, and many women had called her even before this, but she had not wished to go to them.

Good woman, he said: how do you sell these cabbages? Two for a *danaio*[1]. Surely that is

[1] A small piece of money. Two *medaglie*, which was a coin of mixed silver and copper, were worth a *danaio*.

cheap. But I tell you, said Bito, there are only myself and my servant in the house, for all my family are in the town ; and two bunches are too much. Moreover, I like them fresh.

At this time, there were in use in Florence the *medaglie*, two of which were worth a *danaio*. Bito said : you pass by every morning ; give me a bunch now and give me a *danaio*, and take this *medaglia*, and to-morrow morning when you return, you can give me the other bunch. It seemed to the woman that what he said was right, and so she did as he asked.[1] Then she went off to sell the rest of her vegetables at the price which her master had fixed. She returned home and gave Messer Frulli the money. He, counting it over several times, found it a *danaio* short. And he told the servant. She replied : it cannot be so.

Then the master, getting angry with her, asked her if she had not dallied at San Giorgio. She sought to deny the fact, but he plied her so with questions, that she admitted : yes, I stopped for a fine gentleman, who paid me properly. And I must tell you that I have still to give him a

[1] lit. "and so did".

bunch of cabbages.[1] Messer Frulli replied: so you are now a *danaio* out.

He thought over the matter, and perceived the trick, and spoke very roughly to the servant, and asked where the man lived exactly.

And she told him.

He perceived then it was Bito, who had already played some tricks on him.

Burning with rage, he got up early next morning, and put a rusty sword under his coat, and came to the head of the bridge, and there found Bito sitting in company of many excellent folk. He drew out the sword, and would have wounded his man, if some one had not held him by the arm. The people were amazed, wondering what was the matter, and Bito was mightily afraid. But then remembering what had happened, he began to smile.

The folk who were standing around Messer Frulli asked him what it was all about. He told them breathlessly as best he could. Bito ordered the people to stand back (for he said), I want to

[1] The text of this novella is corrupt. There are several slightly different readings.

come to an explanation with you. Let us have no more words about it. Give me back my *danaio* and keep your *medaglia*. And keep the cabbage with God's curse on it. Messer Frulli said: it pleases me well so. And if you had said this before, all this would not have happened.

And not perceiving the trick, he gave him a *danaio* and took a *medaglia*, and went away content.

There was great laughter thereat.

XCVII

Here it is told how a merchant carried wine overseas in casks with two partitions and what happened

A merchant carried wine overseas in casks with two partitions[1]. At the top and the bottom (of the casks) there was wine, and in the middle water, so that half of the cask was wine, and half water. There were spigots at the top and the bottom, but none in the middle. He sold the

[1] The cask was divided into three compartments.

water for wine, and doubled his gains, and as soon as he was paid, he got aboard a ship with his money. And by the will of God there was a big monkey aboard the ship, who took the money from the merchant's pocket, and climbed up to the top of the mast with it.

The man, fearing that the monkey might throw the purse into the sea, went after it, trying to coax it. The beast sat down and opened the purse with his mouth, and took out the gold pieces one by one. He threw first one in to the sea and let another fall on to the deck. And he so acted that one half of the money remained on the ship, which was the just gain of the merchant.

XCVIII

Here it is told of a merchant who bought caps

A merchant was travelling with caps. They got wet and he laid them out to dry. Many monkeys appeared, and each one put a cap on its head, and ran off up into the trees. This seemed a grievous matter to the man. He went back

and bought stockings (and there was bird-lime in them) and he got back his caps (from the monkeys) and did good business[1].

XCIX

Here is told a pretty tale of love

A young man of Florence loved a gentle virgin carnally. She did not love him at all, but loved another youth beyond measure, who loved her too, but not nearly so much as the first one.

And this was evident, for the other had abandoned everything, and had worn himself out, and was quite beside himself; and especially on those days when he did not see her.

A friend of his was sorry for him. After much persuasion he took him away to a most pleasant place; and there they stayed quietly for a fortnight.

In the meantime, the girl quarrelled with her mother. She sent her maid-servant, and let her tell him whom she loved that she desired to elope

[1] The text is probably defective, but this seems to be the meaning of this *novella*.

with him. He was exceedingly glad. The maid said : she desires you to come on horse-back when it is fully night ; she will pretend to go down to the cellars. You will be ready at the door, and she will leap on to the horse behind you ; she is light, and can ride well. He replied : I am well agreed.

When they had thus arranged matters, he prepared everything at a place of his. And there were his friends with him, on horse-back, and he let them wait at the gate[1], lest it be closed. And he went on a fine horse, and passed before her house. She had not been able to come yet because her mother watched her too carefully. He went away to rejoin his friends. But that other was all worn out in the country, and could no longer contain himself. He had mounted his horse. And his companion was unable to persuade him to remain, and he did not want his company.

That evening he arrived at the wall. All the gates were closed, but he went around the town

[1] Of the town. Even in modern Italy the gates of many small towns are closed at night.

until he chanced upon that gate where they were. He entered; he went towards her dwelling, not with the hope of finding or of seeing her, but only to see the place. As he stopped opposite the house, the other had but shortly before gone away. The girl unlocked the gate, and called him in an undertone, and told him to draw his horse nearer. This he was not slow in doing; he approached, and she leaped on the horse's back, and away they went.

When they reached the gate, the other youth's companions did not molest them, for they did not know them. Seeing that if it had been he for whom they were waiting, he would have stayed with them. They rode for well-nigh ten leagues, till they arrived at a fair meadow surrounded with very tall fir-trees. Here they alighted, and bound their horse to a tree; and he began to kiss her. Then she recognised him. She became aware of her mishap, and commenced to weep bitterly. But he took to comforting her, shedding tears, and showed her such respect, that she ceased to weep, and began to grow fond of him, seeing that fortune too was on his side.

And she embraced him.

That other youth rode to and fro several times, till he heard her father making a noise in the privy, and learned from the servant the manner of her escape.

He was aghast.

He returned to his companions, and told them. And they replied: Indeed, we did see him pass with her, but we did not know him; and it is so long since, that he may have gone very far, and be off on such and such a road. They forthwith set off to pursue them. They rode until they found them sleeping wrapt in one another's arms; and they gazed upon them in the light of the moon which had risen. Then they were loath to disturb them, and said: Let us wait here till they wake, and then we will do what we have to do: and so they waited until drowsiness came upon them, and they all fell asleep. The other two meanwhile awoke, and found themselves in this situation.

They marvelled. And the youth said: These men have shown us such courtesy, that God forbid we should do them any hurt. So he mounted

his horse, and she jumped on to another, among the best that were there, and they rode off.

The others awoke, and raised a great lamentation, because they could not continue to search for them.

C

How the Emperor Frederick went to the Old Man of the Mountain

The Emperor Frederick once went to the Veglio, or Old Man of the Mountain, and great honour was done him[1].

The Old Man, in order to show how he was feared, looked up and saw on a tower two of his band who were called assassins[2]. And then he took hold of his great beard, and the two men cast themselves down to earth and died immediately[3].

[1] The Veglio, or Old Man of the Mountain, spoken of in mediæval legends, was an Arabian prince, who lived between Antioch and Damascus, in an inaccessible mountain fastness. He was a tyrant, and had an army of faithful followers. He was probably little more than a superior kind of brigand.

[2] Those who followed the Veglio were called assassins.

[3] Touching his beard was the sign which the Old Man gave to his followers to kill. See Marco Polo.

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